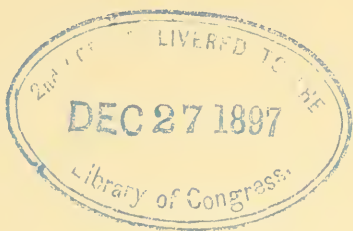


# The Colloquy



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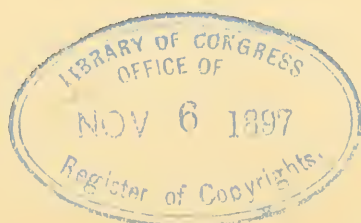




# The Colloquy

Conversations about the Order of  
Things and Final Good, Held in  
the Chapel of the Blessed St. John  
Summarized in Verse  
by Josiah Augustus Seltz

Published in New York by  
G. P. Putnam's Sons 1897



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The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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## The Colloquy



# THE COLLOQUY

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## CONVERSATION I

THE CHAPEL \*\* THE PASSING OF THE GODS

O PENSIVE Muse, that hast accompanied me  
Through Nature's farthest wilds and solitudes,

In this secluded chapel, at our ease,  
We may resume those meditations deep,  
So long engaging us. Thou wilt permit,  
May be, the presence of those come to share  
The silentness; or speaking, wilt reveal  
Something beyond the veil, if something is  
To wait and suffer for.

And ye, good friends,  
Here in retreat, if not too soon I come  
To break upon your charming quietude,  
Some things I would relate, of more would ask,  
The Muse I have invoked so giving aid  
With words appropriate.

## The Colloquy

Once in these aisles,  
As punctually as the day began,  
Or noontide came, or eve, the people knelt,—  
Meek penitents, their eyes suffused with tears,  
Who at the seven stations and before  
The Virgin's and the Savior's images  
Asked pardon for their sins; when, happily,  
At peace with the immortals, begged of them  
Unstinted favors and the gifts desired.  
As punctually priests and acolytes  
Intoned their litanies and said the mass,  
And chanted low their penitential Psalms;  
While statues, pictures, crucifixes, fonts,  
Confessional, and altar brought to mind  
The saintly piety of former times  
And miracles of old and martyrdom  
For Holy Faith. There is not now what then  
Seemed sanctity within these walls, since left  
Thus destitute of sacred ornament  
And air as empty of the hallowed words  
And incense smoke. It is as Heaven and Earth,  
Seen in the childhood of the human race,  
Peopled with spirits and divinities,  
Now empty of the supernatural.

Those pious worshipers lacked never once  
A god or helpful saint of whom to ask,  
While we, not trusting where we have not seen,  
If asking any, ask of the Unknown,—  
The silence whence all things that are have come,  
Bringing our life, and silence whereto all  
The myriads living hasten in return.



## Conversation II

Once Heaven lay near to Earth, so very near  
A tower might be built to reach to it ;  
The azure depths, arched by a firmament  
Of lucid adamant, on which were built  
Secure its battlements and palaces ;  
Or low it rested on the mountain-peaks,  
But for men's fear not inaccessible.  
Seeing almost they made it certainty,  
Locating in it many a fair domain  
And gladsome view—the passageway whereon  
The race of happy gods passed to and fro.  
And in those climes, what the security !  
Where never storm-wind came, excessive heat  
Or cold, or ever wasting age or want ;  
Where none were ever sick, none ever died,  
Drink what they would, or eat, or risk at arms ;  
Finding no limit set to any joy,  
No pain or penance laid on any vice,  
Nor suffered one in conscience for his sin.  
While piety in later time assured  
That over the cerulean expanse  
Changelessly permanent are widest realms,  
Peopled by angels and the sainted dead.  
And that disciple whom the Master loved,  
In vision looked from Patmos' lonely isle  
Into those empyrean heights and saw  
A city which was built of glass and gold,  
Its walls, adorned with gems the costliest,  
Nor ever needing light of Sun or Moon,  
God, dwelling in the midst, the light of it.

Even the unbelieving poet told

## The Colloquy

How in an ecstasy he had beheld  
The murky atmosphere asunder rent  
Baring the deep inane to either pole,  
So making visible those regions dreamed,  
Celestial, summery, serene, sublime,—  
Immortal, blissful, and delectable,  
Where Love Divine and Primal Wisdom bide.  
We look—no firmament is there, but space  
Encircling us, unmeasured, undefined,  
Illimitable depths the bath of stars,—  
Octillion worlds and nebulæ spread out  
Trillions of leagues, plane after plane in height.

And Heaven once spoke to men or gave them  
signs,  
So say the books and legends of the past,  
And wood and vale and fount and hollow Earth  
And Ocean's awful depths gave utterance  
Of the divinities that dwelt in them.  
But Heaven is silent in the later time,  
And wood and vale and fount inaudible,  
Nor hollow Earth, nor Ocean's depths respond;  
And meaningless the omens, prodigies,  
Presages, divinations, dreams, to which  
Antiquity deferred its enterprise.  
And dumb the oracle and mute the voice  
Of prophet, sibyl, medium, pythoress,  
Long heard at Shiloh, Delphi, Antioch,  
Dodona, Cumæ, and in Lybian wilds.  
Silent, as well, the awful mysteries—  
Osirian, Mithraic, Isiac,  
Cabiric, Orphic, Dionysian,

## Conversation II

At Philæ, Susa, Lesbos, Argolis,  
Eleusis, Samothrace, at Crete and Rome.  
No wizard's incantation now transforms,  
And there is none to work a miracle.  
And seen no more the phantom warriors  
In mustered lines march on the Moonlit clouds;  
Nor comets, meteors, eclipses now  
Forebode defeat, calamity, and death.  
*Does Heaven speak?* the Chinese seer inquires,  
Observes then: *The four seasons take their course,*  
*All things the while becoming, being placed*  
*In order, but does Heaven say anything?*  
And we look up but never from the sky  
Have sign or voice, only those awful depths,  
The lonesome stillness of Infinity,  
And flaming energies which speed their round.  
Did childish superstition thus delude  
The men of former times, or are ourselves  
Materialized with our activities,—  
Our occult faculties and spiritual,  
By world and sense o'erlaid and atrophied?

Is it that we are blinded by the light  
Invention brings? with our great telescopes  
Behold the milliard worlds, but miss the scenes  
In which our fathers found supreme delight?  
That was a world far lovelier, methinks,  
Which olden poets knew, than Earth is now,  
And times, with which our own may not compare,  
When men of Greece spoke in its purity  
The language of the gods. And how unlike  
Our world with its material interests,

## The Colloquy

The sacred lands and constant providence  
The Hebrews knew! of which tradition tells,—  
Peniel, Haran, Moreh, Mamre's plain,  
And holy mount where God appeared to them;  
Unlike the wilderness where they were fed  
By miracle—had manna for their bread  
And quails for meat; out of the smitten rock  
And cleft, the springs of water for their drink.

The past we may not bring, nor may the Earth  
The ancient fathers knew again delight,  
Since we have searched it out and looked beyond.  
But comforting the hope they had: to walk  
Sometime the Heaven as they had walked the Earth.

Ay, but the Heavens are empty as the world!  
The firmament above is tenantless  
And uninhabited of gods are all  
The mountain-tops—Olympos, Kaf, Elboorz,  
Seir, Sinai, Himala, and Ida's plain.  
And seen no more, celestial visitants,  
Walking the paths of that sequestered vale  
Where Paris shepherded his snow-white flocks;  
Nor in the dells of Ida's wood, as when  
Athena, Aphrodite, Hera came  
Before him in their native loveliness,  
That he, most beautiful of men, might tell  
Which of those queens immortal was most fair.  
No more immortals in their festive halls,  
At banqueting, resolve the fate of men:  
No more their shadows rise in still abodes,  
In light of Evening Star or the pale Moon;

## Conversation II

Deserted their aërial palaces  
And spacious caverns of the Underworld,  
And spoiled the sacred groves and hallowed grounds.  
No more their temples glisten at the dawn,  
And broken now, or carried to strange lands,  
Are their inimitably sculptured forms,  
Perfect in beauty, grace, and majesty.  
Asgard is empty of its revelers,—  
Thor, Odin, Balder, Heimdall, Vithar, Tyr,  
North gods who ruled the world so merrily.  
And vacant, now, are Mount Sumero's thrones  
Where once ruled the Four Regents of the Earth.  
The mighty deities, Bel, Asshur, Zeus,  
Varuna, Indra, Vishnu, Siva, Brahm,  
Ormazd, Osiris, Amun, Neph, Khem, Pthah,  
Pachacamac, and Tezcatlipoca,  
With Elohim of Israel, are dead.  
And gone are they, a numerous progeny,  
To Superstition born and Fear and Dread,  
Long aiding, though, the cunning, crafty priests,  
And despotisms to hold their evil power;—  
False, jealous, sensual, capricious gods,  
Invested with our human littleness,  
And greedy gods that begged for richest gifts;  
Sullen, despotic gods, proud majesties,  
And misshaped monsters, who, in lurid light  
Of human sacrifice and orgies held,  
And awful incantations, were appeased.  
And gone with them Silenos, Bakchos, Pan,  
Apollo, Cupid, Fro; Frost Giants, Elves,  
And Genii, Harpies, Ogres, Goblins, Trolls,  
The Graces and those fair divinities,—



## The Colloquy

Napeads, Naiads, Meliads, Oreads,  
Dwelling in groves, in vales, on banks of flowers,  
In mountain mists, in fountains, silver streams.

Eden is lost to us; forever lost  
Its Tree of Knowledge and its Tree of Life.  
And disenchanted is the mythic world  
Of Ithaka, and all the land of dreams.  
And no one now seeks the Elysian Fields,  
The Celtic island-valley, Avalon,  
And no one, a terrestrial paradise,  
Nor ever one again, those even climes  
And sheltered vales where none grow old and die,  
Or think to find again Saturnian rule.  
And none now finds the ash-tree, Yggdrasil,  
Whose leaves are green with an unwithering bloom,  
And none the Fountain of Eternal Youth.  
And uranographers may not behold  
The peopled empires of the starry depths;  
Nor has one now those easy liberties,  
In Time and Space, that were the privilege  
Of all the generations of the gods.

The natural alone is visible,—  
The round of planets, constellations, suns;  
Day following the night, the night the day;  
And in their turn the seasons of the year.  
And following, one after other one,  
The toiling generations of mankind—  
Changing and yet the same—phenomenon  
Moving obedient to necessity

## Conversation II

Or endless series of efficient cause,  
Produced and reproduced continually.

Could we look back to the remotest past,  
Or down to farthest point of future time,  
We should but see unwearied Nature's course  
In marking evolution of the worlds,—  
Kosmos from chaos gathering the worlds  
And worlds to chaos making their return,—  
Lighting and darkening of countless suns,—  
Innumerable creatures finding life,  
Living their little day and perishing.

## CONVERSATION II

### THE HIDDEN CREATOR \*\* INQUIRIES

THE books have taught, and pious men believe,  
That somewhere in the tract invisible  
Resides a personal Intelligence,  
Who reigns supreme throughout the Universe.  
But where in Nature's course made manifest ?  
When heard his voice in the affairs of men ?  
And who, in his experience, has known him ?  
Would not such high and mighty ruler show  
Most signally his power in the world ?  
Yet through our history the wrong persists—  
Our misrule, robbery, and murdering,  
Our sins, our vices, crimes, idolatries ;  
As human might or selfishness controls,—  
Ambition, lust, greed, hate, and vanity,  
And not the mandate of Omnipotence.

And had Omniscient Wisdom broken once  
The outer silence would there not have been  
A revelation given to the world  
Suiting such Author and Intelligence ?  
But in our sacred books what fables, myths,  
Inaccuracies, and disputed texts !

## Conversation 11

Or, brought from Heaven, the revelation claimed,  
Something of Heaven itself it should contain.  
But what the silence, the omission here !

If from Eternity there was a scheme  
To discipline mankind and educate  
And save from sin, why was the plan of it  
Revealed so bunglingly and partially ?—  
Only to favored few in favored lands,  
After those ages long of ignorance,  
Of brutish savagery and heathen night,  
When men, in multitudes beyond compute,  
Had perished in their sins, which, even now,  
The greater number living do not know ?  
Or given to the few, as claimed, complete,  
Infallible, why are those having it  
Forever in dispute of what it is ?  
If there is an Intelligence on high,  
Is he not able to reveal himself  
To men in way he may be understood ?  
And of the things revealed, why has there not  
Been something of the useful, practical,—  
Plain truths for all mankind and moral light,  
In record none would think of questioning ?  
Like shipwrecked mariners, who grope their way  
Up through the scarcely penetrable bush  
Of Anticosta isle,—like traveler  
Through maze of vine and branch in Tropic  
wood,—  
Like one alone in trackless wild at night,  
Nor star, nor chart to guide, so we are left,  
To find the knowledge that concerns us most.

## The Colloquy

If God is and is love, would he not speak  
Like a kind parent talking to his child ?  
Yet those presuming to make known his will,  
How sparing with the messages of love !  
How plentiful with wrath, damnation, doom !  
And only heretics think to proclaim  
For man a larger hope and blessedness.  
Thus Malachi and Paul proclaim the Word :  
*I hated Esau, Jacob have I loved.*

And if Religion was designed to be  
Our chief concern in life, our hope in death,  
Why have such superstitions clouded it ?  
Why still to idols joined ? to ignorance ?  
Why to the Thrones of Darkness so allied  
That in the progress of intelligence,  
Science, Philosophy, and Poetry  
Desert it in the search for truth and light ?

Or Heaven its prophets sent to teach mankind,  
And saviors to redeem them from their sins,—  
If Jesus, Gautama, Prometheus once,  
Through sorrow, sacrifice, and suffering,  
Atonement made to save a fallen race,  
Why is the moral world so little changed ?  
Sin baleful, ruinous, as at the first ?  
As grievous and as troublous our brief life ?  
Had these not come, had men not fared as well,—  
Sickened and died and turned to dust as now ?



## CONVERSATION III

OF LIFE, DEATH, AND FUTURITY \*\* INQUIRIES

WHAT problems these—our life, our destiny!  
Engaging the acutest minds, the most  
Profound in argument; none answering,  
Not finding what the Kosmos has concealed.  
If man is animal in his descent,  
When, in the awful past, was it that first  
Our ferine ancestors were humanized?  
Or if divine, why is our Earthly life  
Degraded thus in sense and perishing?  
Or born immortal, why have we the fear  
So constantly, so awfully of death?  
If part of universal made alive,  
How came the living to this little part?  
And if to live is to be miserable,  
Why do the very atoms will to live?  
Or, if vast Nature is intelligent,  
Why those tremendous crises, cataclysms,  
Calamities, abortions, accidents,  
That death immortal seems and not the life?  
And grounded where the reason for our hope  
In life eternal? Can the soul live on  
Without material environment?—

## The Colloquy

As individual, in a universe  
Forever changing, and where everything  
Sometime began and sometime must have end ?  
And to what fate are all the living doomed,  
When suns grow cold and lose their brilliancy  
And planets their orbital energies ?

The boast of Paul, that the last enemy  
Of man was conquered and was captive led,  
And Milton saying, that the bitterness  
Of death is past, have never had response  
In Nature, nor have brought to piety  
And sentiment a love and reverence  
For the destroyer; still, as in the past,  
There is the loathing and revolt of life  
At dissolution,—always death a dread  
Appalling presence, to the most devout,  
As to the skeptic and the sensualist,  
The one o'erwhelming terror of the mind.

And does Earth only wait deliverance ?  
Is it not every habitable world  
In space ? This very day was shown to me,  
A fragment of a meteoroid that held  
A diamond; another which contained  
Resin or amber, indicating thus  
Organic matter or vitality,  
May be thrown from volcanoes on the Earth,  
Beyond its atmosphere and now returned,  
As falling cinders, but more probably  
Come out of space, from some disrupted world,  
And showing how death held dominion there,

## Conversation 1111

Thus telling, as Earth's fragments sometimes will  
To some far orb, her history of woe.  
And is death visitant on every sphere ?  
The star dust scattering alike the seeds  
Of life and death ? Must some, in every world,  
For others suffer pain and martyrdom ?  
The innocent and harmless feed and clothe  
The ravenous ? The weak hold up the strong ?  
Has Mercury the story of the cross ?  
Venus ? or Mars ? Do stars that now give us  
Their fullest light, await the awful scenes  
Of human sacrifice and agonies  
Of their Gethsemanes ? Yet tragedy  
Of Calvary and burning of their saints ?  
And seen in every habitable sphere,  
Earth's multitude of miseries and wrongs ?  
And seen the great procession passing on,  
As here in traveling through vale of tears,—  
Numbers innumerable that war has slain  
And famine, pestilence; and numbers more,  
Whom vice and want are hastening to their graves,  
With those whom sickness, grief, and age destroy ?

Among the deeds and sayings marvelous  
Attributed to Gautama, occurs  
An incident, related first to show  
His matchless wisdom, endless sympathy,  
Since greatly prized and told in prose and verse,  
In what, though, teaching us or comforting ?  
A woman, so the tale divine proceeds,  
Kisagotami named, whose child had died  
And she had borne it in her arms, from house

## The Colloquy

To house, in search of one that might heal it  
Of death, was told at last to seek the one  
Who might have medicine to help. To him,  
The Buddha, then, thus sorrowing, she went,  
Pressing yet closer to her breast her child,  
The lifeless burden not less dear to her.  
And he, what gave he in her awful need ?  
Sent her away upon the idle quest—  
To beg for mustard-seed, at any house  
Where none had died—not husband, wife, nor child,  
Nor slave. And the poor woman went her round,  
Only to learn that every house had death  
Its own; and only cure was this—to know  
That death and sorrow is the lot of all.

For last and greatest ill none has the cure.  
For thee, O Death, the charmer never moves,  
Who hast not pity and who hearest not  
The prayers of man to thee, nor Love's sweet speech,  
Nor children's cry, nor woman's loud lament;  
Nor carest for Earth's glory, wealth, or power.

And of the hope men have to live again  
Either on Earth or in another world,  
Mid joys unspeakable, as most believe,  
Where is the evidence to make it sure ?  
Ah, the uncertainty! a dream! a wish!

If death is not the end of consciousness,—  
If all of those who lived are living still,  
Inhabiting their realms of bliss or gloom,  
Is it not probable, supposable,

## Conversation IIII

That messages would sometime come from them ?  
Or from among so great a company  
Some one, if those realms be, return to us ?  
But who such message had ? who entertained  
Sometime such extramundane visitant ?

True, it is written that Elisha raised  
The widow's son,—that Lazarus was called  
To life,—that Er and Viraf lived again,  
And that Empedokles with charms called back  
The soul of Pantheia from death's cold trance,—  
That Finnish magic Lemminkainen's life  
Restored ; recovered from Manala's flood,  
Dark, whirling, deep, in dread Tuone's realm,—  
That Orpheus, taming the Infernal powers  
With melody, as of Æolian strings,  
Released from Hades sweet Euridike ;  
Again had led her to the Thrakian vales,  
Had he not looked around, the forfeiting,  
Through love's solicitude, all he had dared,  
For only with averted gaze he might  
Return with her to Earth ;—that Herakles  
Seized Dis with his strong arms and held him fast,  
Till he had given promise to restore  
Alkestis to Admetos' royal house ;  
And that at Sardis Cæsar's shade appeared  
To Brutus, sorely him disquieting,  
And Theseus to the Greeks at Marathon ;—  
That Jesus, risen from the tomb, appeared  
To Mary Magdalena, to the Two  
When going to Emmaus, afterward  
To the Eleven, when they sat at meat.



## The Colloquy

But those returned to life, soon after died,  
Leaving no further record of themselves,  
And those appearing never after came—  
When coming, told not of another world,—  
While none reanimates our own, and none  
Of all the mighty dead appears to us.

And what is Earthly immortality ?  
What to live in our deeds ? in others' lives ?  
Of the first generations of mankind,  
No deed of merit nor a single name  
Has reached us, or has place in history.  
And as the acts of men accumulate,  
So one has lately written, only that  
Which is supremely cosmopolitan  
In its importance to the race, is held  
In memory ; forgotten toil and tears  
And martyrdom, the myriads of the dead  
Who through the ages wrought,—that now are dust.

Not anything that man contrives endures.  
Behold in ruins all the past ! mounds, tombs,  
And desolations on the goodly sites  
Of cities, palaces, in fertile vales.  
As ruinous faiths, institutions, states :  
See what the wrecks Time makes of monarchies,—  
Egyptian, Median, Babylonian,  
Assyrian, Parthian, Carthaginian,  
Indian, Persian, Macedonian,  
Scythian, Byzantine, Mogul, Saracen,  
And Roman, proudest, mightiest of all.

## Conversation 1111

This is the history of government,  
Past empire, state, and nationality,—  
The revolutions that have made its power,  
The revolutions that have ruined it.

In vain thy pride, O man! Thy boasted power!  
Thy regal splendor and thine affluence!  
Thy conquests and dominion over Earth!  
Since Death and Time make spoil of thee and thine;  
Thy palaces, thy monuments, thyself,  
Forever in the unseen vanishing.

In what has man the promise given him,  
Sometime upon the Earth to realize  
A perfect life and without pain and death—  
The poet's dream and vision of the seer?  
How many species have become extinct!  
And our own race waits but the little while  
The changeful Earth may give it sustenance,  
The while the Sun in shrinking gives its heat,  
The while the Earth is thickening its crust—  
The time which it will take the thirsty rocks  
To suck the waters of the Ocean up  
And drain the atmosphere. Nor may we hope  
Further to urge upon futurity  
This mortal history. A little while  
In time, as measured by eternity,  
And urn and sepulcher will have their seals  
With none to break, none to inquire of them.

The human race will have no heir to claim  
What it accumulates. In hoary age

## The Colloquy

It will be childless, wasted, desolate ;  
Its toil and struggle through those ages long,  
Its aspirations, hopes, all come to naught,  
None pitying ; some scientist perhaps  
On Jupiter, observing the dead Earth,  
Will write of us,—of what we may have been,  
As we of life on Earth's pale satellite.  
Or further, searching out the kosmic dust,  
Find some scant remnant of our extinct forms  
To theorize on—wonder what we were.

A horrible uncertainty torments  
Belief, since all that lives returns again  
To lifeless elements : the elements  
Themselves and habitable worlds disperse  
As mists through the illimitable void,  
Their energies to ether oceans given ;  
Leaving no further vestige of their life  
Nor theater for life in future acts,—  
*Our bones and stars then in a common pyre,*  
*As Lucan says, reserved for the same fire.*



## CONVERSATION IV

### THE CREATIONS OF ART, THEOLOGY, AND PHILOSOPHY

HOW weak, how dim, how earthly, sensual,  
Our pictures of immortals—angels, saints,  
Heroes, and saviors apotheosized!  
How shadowy the realm of their abode!  
How feebly do they touch reality!  
How poorly suited all to the employ  
And errands high to which we order them!  
Will wings bear up the soul in passing space  
Void of an atmosphere, or ever lift  
Our bodies up to Heaven? This is presumed,  
Though, in all sacred art—a clumsy folk  
Girt with the pinions of the bird, and lo  
An angel host! or chubby, laughing babes,  
With winglets, and fat kherubs soar aloft!  
The types of personages so produced  
Thought to inhabit all the spirit realms.  
Thus Cimabue represented them,  
Visara, Veronese, Tintoret;  
Thus Botticello, Reubens, Raphael,  
Simone, Titian, Michael Angelo,  
Velasquez, Duccio, Giotto; thus Van Eycks,

## The Colloquy

Painting *the Adoration of the Lamb*.  
With rainbow wings and golden aureole,  
With vernal coverings and shadowless,  
Fiesole, in his angelic choirs,  
Invests the maiden, youth, and warrior,  
The poet's heroes and his heroines.  
Such company Corregio ranged about  
*The Virgin in the Holy Night* ; around  
*Madonna and her Child in Glory* ; thus  
Murillo painted that great multitude  
In *the Miraculous Conception* ; thus  
Il Perugina winged St. Michael,  
And Donatello's marbles reproduce  
This freak anatomy. But whatso'er  
These forms, of whom or what the counterfeit,  
Whether the likeness of a blessed saint,  
Or model, mistress, woman of the street,  
No less faith looks to them and pious folk  
Take seriously to heart these effigies  
Nor once mistrust.

And woeful ! pitiful !  
If disembodied souls on day of doom  
And at the sound of the archangel's trump  
Should, from the loathsome graves, reclaim their  
dust  
And bear again this cumbrous weight of earth,  
Yet this in the Apostles' Creed is taught,  
Confessed by all throughout the Christian world.

As weak the forms of our divinities  
And attributes ascribed to Deity.

## Conversation IV

Spinoza, thou hast written much of God,  
Hast said, *All is in God and God in all ;*  
*Besides whom nothing is to be conceived,*  
*And nothing is, he does not bring about.*  
What the extent of being this includes !  
Is everything in endless form and type,  
All likenesses and all diversities—  
Supremest mystery and paradox.  
Is Providence and is malignant fiend ;  
Is Heaven, is Hell,—is the Pure Principle,  
Right, Justice, Mercy, and Redeeming Love,  
Is Chance, Fate, Crime, Intrigue, Oppression,  
Wrong,  
Is all, is nothing, is the fruitful womb,  
Is wasteful, loathéd death and woeful grave ;  
The source of kindness, virtue, piety,  
In man and what in him is brutishness.  
So representing the Omnipotent,  
The One all-wise, the One all-powerful,  
As maker of the evil and the pain,  
Himself of what he makes the sufferer.  
And is this God ? Supreme Intelligence ?  
Is he the worm crushed heedless under foot ?  
The hunted, trembling animal at bay ?  
The wounded, bleeding, dying on the field ?  
The outcast, wailing, sinking in despair ?  
The vile, the sinful, and the blasphemous,  
Shaming his being and despising it ?  
Was it his voice that from the cross cried out,  
*Eli, Eli, lama sabacthani ?*

And Christian Theism, by what terms expressed !

## The Colloquy

Patristic riddles in arithmetic,  
Employed in argument and ritual;  
As read: *Three Persons and one God*,—one God  
But trinary or Trinal Unity.  
And to impersonate God's sovereignty,  
Taking an Oriental despotism  
For type; with such capricious tyranny  
Presumes to show his kindly attributes,  
Love, Mercy, Justice, helping Providence;  
Though when according him supremacy,  
Eternal, absolute, permits in Heaven  
Rebellion, and in Hell an enemy  
Implacable and unsubduable.

How weak is all historic evidence  
Relating to the supernatural!  
The prophets, patriarchs, the saviors, saints  
Fading, dissolving in the mythical.  
What wisdom and what moral excellence,  
Till late, to Adam were attributed!  
Upon this name, now nothingness, depend  
Our various structures of theology,  
And elements of Orthodox belief,—  
What is related of the Fall of Man  
And of Imputed Guilt in consequence,  
With doctrine of the Incarnation taught,  
Of the Vicarious Expiation made,  
And efficacy of the sacraments.  
And what is our reliance on the past,  
Though institutional religion still  
Turns reverently to it for defense  
And anchorage secure for future hopes?

## Conversation IV

Broken are all its sacred promises,  
And faiths and prophecies discredited.

How old, how erudite, voluminous,  
Is our philosophy, and yet how weak,  
How piteous its limits, ignorance,  
Attempting knowledge of the Infinite!  
Resting the most on some absurdity.  
What has the wisest told us of ourselves  
And of the cause of things and of their end ?  
Ye learned Cosmographers and Physicists,  
As many as would represent to us  
The method of becoming of what is,  
Or world, or life, or human consciousness,  
Which had precedence in development,  
Motion, or function, or intelligence ?  
And was the world adapted to our use  
By purpose, predetermining design,  
Or were ourselves adapted to the world,  
Through long selection and experiment ?

And, sage Pythagoras, how may the soul,  
Full grown and old in its experiences  
Of multitudinous endeavors, toils,  
And mighty thoughts and weighty problems solved,  
Take up its dwelling in the infant brain,  
So puny, thoughtless, and expressionless ?  
Or as Lucretius inquired of thee,  
Do souls wait ingress in the germs of life  
When they are generated, and contend  
One with another for priority ?  
Though we, in turn, may ask as much of him :—



## The Colloquy

If, at a time, the atoms were engaged  
In conflict for the prize of consciousness ?  
For reason and the throne of Deity ?

Ye, too, learned Pundits and Theosophists,  
When seeing how the body perishes,  
Severed in parts or falls a putrid mass,  
How reason ye, or by what sight possessed,  
To claim an astral form, analogous  
Though immaterial, survives this wreck ?

Plato, if what is immaterial lives,  
What of ourselves and what we prize survives ?  
What will our love be when these mortal forms  
That are its treasures crumble into dust ?  
Take from our senses now this touch of earth  
And what remains beside to be desired ?

But found all of the old cosmogonies,  
A motley web of fables, folk-lore, dreams,  
Apocalyptic visions, and perhaps,  
A grain of truth, not worth the sifting out.  
And yet in what are our hypotheses,  
The various suppositions we have made  
About the cause and genesis of things,  
Improved on those held by the ancient world ?

The argument of Paley proves too much  
And makes a very drudge of Providence.  
Or Nature shown to be an organism,  
How feebly with her endless processes  
Does our poor human handicraft compare !

## Conversation IV

Spencer, great toil and wisdom thou hast given  
In study of the cause and course of things,  
Or nebulæ, or worlds, or forms of life,  
The origin of customs, laws, and faiths;  
Writing a comprehensive history  
Of intellectual development,  
Yet missing somehow what we most would know,—  
The genius of the world which brings about  
Whatso it wills—the *power not ourselves*  
*That makes for righteousness.* For not alone  
Through differentiation has accrued,  
Or more complexity, the tendency  
Of moral forces which advance the race,  
Initiating epochal reforms  
And enterprise extra-traditional.  
And what idolatry is more absurd  
Than worshiping of the Unknowable ?

And Darwin, how in thy Pangenesis,  
Is the provision made for organisms  
Of such great multitude and varied form,  
With burden yet of every tendency,  
Heredity and the experiences  
Accumulating in the stream of life ?  
For all, that thou hast written of descent,  
The egg remains an unsolved mystery,  
Holding in trust, this microscopic sphere,  
Transparent, jelly-like, the life of Earth  
Through untold million years; the life of man,  
Continuing in those few racial types  
From earliest traditions until now.  
And other mysteries, as well, remain,—

## The Colloquy

Thy scheme as it includes psychology  
And ethical development of man.  
For wherein have the selfish instincts helped  
To what is noblest, saintliest in life ?  
In these alone have we the reason found,  
Why men in every land, in every age,  
Have honored certain virtues,—kindliness,  
Or prudence, rectitude, fidelity,  
Denial, chastity, and temperance,  
The heroisms the most and altruism ?

All ye, Neo-Lamarckian naturalists,  
With what you teach us of heredity  
And of the influence of environment,  
How little do your several schemes provide  
For the surprises and the accidents  
Occurring through our human history !  
And from the very first in what is changed  
The moral constitution of mankind ?

In Ethics and Religion, as applied,  
What signal failures seen in every age !  
How many are our precepts, preachments, rites,  
Our disciplines and schemes to perfect us !  
And numberless our platforms and ideals,  
Perennial agitations and reforms  
Engaging every sin and social wrong ;  
As numberless our laws restricting crime.  
But are our evils less ? Men put down wrongs  
And tyrants,—other wrongs and tyrants rise.  
We conquer one disease, another one  
Defies our medicine and quarantine.



## Conversation IV

We strive to banish crime and poverty,  
But life and property, how insecure,  
Save for police and constant vigilance  
With cost of lock and vault! while beggars swarm,  
And almshouse, jail, and penitentiary  
Are crowded full. In lands most civilized,  
How great is the invested interest  
Of vice—drink, gambling, sensuality!  
And fearful is the aggregate account  
Of vagrance, libertinage, drunkenness.  
What scandals in our current news! And full  
Our calendars with acts of violence.  
In work what shams, evasions, and deceits!  
In trade what cheatings, insincerities,  
And what dissembling in our social life!  
And covered by respectability  
What moral rottenness and brutalism!  
How thoughtless, careless often, Christian men,  
Of public virtue and of sacred trusts!  
Or holding honor little in esteem.  
One robs a bank and one the government,  
One steals the earnings of great companies  
And one the widow's and the orphan's goods,  
As careless of official purity  
And honest politics the most of men.  
What party but would fatten on the spoils?  
What legislature, but is bought and bribed  
By some monopoly or syndicate?  
And who, in public life, will put aside  
The claim of party or of private gain  
For statesmanship and service to mankind?  
And where is the municipality

## The Colloquy

That is not ruled by its worst elements?  
What popular election held without  
Intimidation, bribery, and fraud ?  
What people's party but has been betrayed ?  
What laborers' society not wrecked  
By its dissensions, or to ruin led  
By oily and self-seeking demagogues ?  
In every land the many still complain  
Of inequality, injustice, wrong ;  
The few presuming still to own and rule,  
As Theodosius' heirs divide the world,  
Or still to keep their privilege and power,  
Subordinate and rob the multitudes,  
While widely yet the savage dominates  
The habits and the polity of men.  
How frequently is the appeal to arms  
E'en by the subjects of the Prince of Peace !  
The Christian nations are the militant,—  
See Europe's armaments and soldiery,  
And hear her rumors and her cries of war !  
What weighty problems, tenure of the land  
And press of population on the means  
Of its subsistence ! Statesmen, moralists,  
Economists, and theologians wait  
Solution of these yet and remedy.  
What questions these in domesticity  
Presented by our modern industries !  
In economics, too, what problems raised  
By corporations, syndicates, and trusts !  
Like highway robbers in the olden time,  
Who asked a fee of all that carried corn  
And merchandise, or Bedouins, who ask

## Conversation IV

As if in right of every caravan,  
So these upon the products of our fields  
And factories,—our earnings, purchases,—  
Our fuel, light, and fare when traveling  
Lay their percentages and make demands.  
What vexing problems for the publicists  
Of the enlightened world the Asian hordes,  
Restless for migratory enterprise,  
Or arming now, soon to dispute in war,  
Western possession and supremacy!  
And still, as at the first, confronting us  
The problems of man's sin and ignorance:  
Our means and wills so little adequate  
To the world's need, still less, our faith and love.  
How largely, yet, Religion is maintained  
By privileged, immemorial beggary!  
Nor common sense nor business principles  
Serving our missions and benevolence.  
What effort needed yet to Christianize  
The vast unyielding Heathendoms of Earth!  
What labor to uplift and educate  
The retrograding people of our towns!  
Sunken in gloomy, sodden misery,—  
Degenerate as those low forms of life  
Inhabiting the sunless depths of seas.  
And what the labor yet to humanize  
The mindless matadore and pugilist,  
The vile procuress and those brutal men,  
Unprincipled and cunning, who but live  
To brutalize and to degrade their kind!  
And where is the imputed righteousness,  
Atoning for the sins of ages past?—

## The Colloquy

The wanton murders and licentiousness,  
Common to all the ancient despotisms ?  
Of those amazing sensualities  
To Syrian and Chaldean worship joined ?  
Or the Seleucian depravities  
And lechery of the Byzantine kings ?  
The horrid treacheries, shames, guiltiness  
Of the incestuous house of Ptolemy,  
And dissoluteness of imperial Rome,  
Or the abominations, crimes, and sins  
Of Italy while under Papal rule ?  
Whose love put out of memory the deeds  
Of Herod ? Judas ? Israel's high priest ?  
Of Borgia, Bobadilla, Robespierre ?  
Of Mocenego ? Where the altruism,  
To hide the motiveless malignity  
Of an Iago, and the tyranny,  
As motiveless and inexcusable,  
Of Dionysius ? of Domitian ?  
Of Periander ? Physcon ? Marius ?  
Of Nero, England's Richard, and those kings  
Whose memory, whose glory, is their crimes ?  
What font for moral healing purify,  
Louis XV., the Defender of the Faith,  
And his vile bawds and mistresses ? or those,  
The shame of history—lewd Rhodope,  
Læna, Lais, Phryne, Claudius' wives,  
Leontium, profligate Merozia,  
The lustful spouses of the Antonines  
And her who matched the wit of Perikles,  
Or her whom Belisarius took to wife ?  
What the new birth, that could regenerate

## Conversation IV

Aurelius' profligate and cruel son,  
Or shameless, swinish Elagabalus ?  
What masses said and what indulgence bought  
Will take Fonseca's blame from memory ?  
Or ever Ferdinand's ingratitude ?  
What rite the Law or Church prescribes avail  
To cleanse from blood the house of Constantine ?  
What expiation ever made, redeem  
A Catherine de Medicis or those  
Who held the office of inquisitors ?—  
De Torquemada ? Valdez ? Dominic ?  
Or that Genevan Protestant, austere,  
Illiberal, who did not think to spare,  
Even where Rome had spared, the cell and flame ?  
What moral effort change the destiny  
Of one, like Œdipos, to evil born,  
Or like Sextus Tarquinius, to life  
Of villainy ? What penance named restore  
To innocence, to love, to happiness,  
A Beatrice Cenci, forever set  
Apart in sorrow from all of our kind ?  
Or that adulteress, whose luckless life  
Brought countless woes to Greece, to Ilium  
Its ruin ? Or, if offering excuse,  
How free from their reproach those who have held  
Through every age, their evil memory ?—  
The vain, voluptuous Semiramis,  
Fabled of old as despot to have sat  
On Ninus' throne in Babylonia ;  
Of Phædra, Klytæmnestra, Jezebel,  
And that Philistine harlot who betrayed  
The great deliverer of Israel,



## The Colloquy

Her blame accumulating with the years,  
Where'er the dismal tragedy is told ;  
Or those supreme in cruelty and vice—  
Fiendful, dehumanized Caligula,  
Dona Urraca, shame of shameless Spain,  
Philip II., of unfathomed crimes,  
And Timon, pinnacled in solitude,  
O'er wasted worlds and millions of his slain.

And ethics in our later theories  
In what confusion as to right and wrong !  
Conscience dethroned and old-time principle,  
And cunning, prudence, and expediency  
Exalted as the mentors of the race,  
Or right is made the synonym of might,  
While wrong and crime and vice and sin consist  
In what turns loathsome or is profitless ;  
Justice, in what is most advantageous,  
And duty, in what is agreeable.  
And law is found in Rob Roy's *good old rule*,  
As Wordsworth put in verse: *that they should take*  
*Who have the power, and they should keep who can ;*  
Or let each follow his own interest.

And what is justice in the Universe ?  
Is it that we are to be comforted  
By this materialistic argument,—  
That every individual but receives  
The benefits and evils which arise  
Of his own nature, and hence must endure  
The pains and sacrifices consequent ?  
Or is it as the Optimist asserts,

## Conversation II

That, in the present world, each one receives,  
In measure microscopically true,  
Award and penalty as is deserved ?  
There is the loss Time never compensates,  
The wrong no Earthly justice ever rights.  
Countless the debts not canceled at the grave!  
Countless the claims the world has not yet paid!  
Vast the accounts sent to futurity!  
What numbers robbed of goods, of right, of life,  
Of liberty, not compensated yet!  
Esau of birthright and of blessing robbed  
And Naboth and Uriah robbed and killed;  
Columbus, through the innocent mistake  
Of a geographer, denied the name  
Of his discoveries, and Swammerdam  
And Owen cheated of deserving claims  
To memory,—with millions who have toiled  
But to enrich their masters or the few  
Of greater wit—themselves of naught possessed.  
And what the proud appeal of innocent,  
To farthest ages and eternities  
And yet unseen intelligence, to judge  
Their acts, and trusting they will be approved ?

But so our culture tends, the while proclaims  
The gospel of despair and bafflement—  
Searches and delves to very uttermost,  
To find the underlying course of things,  
Instable, vanishing as in all else.  
Pursuing still the dismal theme, lays bare  
All sacred usage, all solemnities,  
The roots of modesty and filial love,

## The Colloquy

Of conscience, honor, duty, patriotism,  
The origin of worship and our laws;  
Or it brings low all the moralities  
And the humanities that were the joy  
And boast of pious men, in which they found  
The proof of intuition and the voice  
Of Heaven. Nor have we ground to controvert—  
For what is barbarous or villainous  
But sometime had the sanction of mankind ?

Ah! with the banished gods we leave behind  
Many a shrine where piety reposed,  
And old enchanted circles and the scenes  
Of deeds heroic, venturesome, whence rose  
The legends dearer to our hearts than gold:  
Putting behind us far the saintly lives  
And kindly fellowships of Faith and Love;  
Farther and farther from us those pure ones  
Who neither did nor ever thought the wrong.  
Weep, you, if Heaven itself is of the past,  
Rejoice, if all the hells are covered up.



## CONVERSATION V

### OF PRAYER AND RESEARCH

ST. CHRYSOSTOM has said that nothing is  
So powerful as prayer; things difficult  
It easy makes and renders possible  
Impossibilities. But seldom now  
The Christian prays with such full confidence.  
E'en Catholics, of late, with half a heart  
Invoke the Virgin and their patron saints—  
As one pays tribute to formality  
Repeat their rosaries and manuals,  
Expecting not an answer when they ask.  
And none receives reward as men report  
The ancient fathers and elect obtained.

*O godless, faithless, prayerless*, lately one  
Has written, so reproves our unbelief,  
But how may one though praying hope to change  
The natural occurrence of events,  
Or forces, laws, that are immutable ?  
Not for our asking, do we gain the stores  
Which Nature has in keeping for our use,  
But as we wrest from her and subjugate.  
Or she bestows her gifts impartially :

## The Colloquy

Alike upon the evil and the good,  
She sends her blessings and calamities;  
Alike to each she gives the vernal rain,  
Soft sunshine, limpid dew, and balmy breeze,  
The full-eared harvest and the melting fruit.  
The ocean breeze propels the pirate's sails,  
As surely as the peaceful merchantman's,  
While darkness shields the thief and murderer,  
The stealthy marches of invading foes,  
As often as it shelters innocence,  
Or covers the advance of patriots  
And their retreat, or flight of fugitives.

And who, for asking, has obtained the aid  
Of unseen powers and companionship ?  
And what intelligence is known to us,  
As supra-human, to which one can say  
Consistently, *My Father*, or, *My Friend* ?

And has one for his genius, industry,  
Wisdom, or piety yet made advance  
Upon those boundaries that have defied  
The race from the beginning, or has had  
Insight or revelation from those depths  
Concealing First and Last and Cause of All ?

Man lives enveloped in the mystery  
Of his own being, seeks but never finds  
The object of his search ; sinks in the grave  
And leaves the secret of himself untold.

What have his weary speculations, plied  
Through the long generations, won for him ?

## Conversation V

And what his supplications to High Heaven ?  
Inquirer I, myself, have been how long !  
Of every science asking and of faith,  
Of wise philosophy and occult lore ;  
Explored the deep ravines, the rifts and mines,  
And called the ancient rocks as witnesses  
To tell how Earth's foundations first were laid ;  
Delved in salt-lick, in shell-heap, midden, cave,  
Peat, drift, and marl, in quest of the remains  
Of extinct animals and vestiges  
Of man and art in pre-historic times ;  
Lifted from mounds their crumbling skeletons  
And calcined bones and bits of pottery ;  
The sea's depths dredged for ancient forms of life  
And searched in slime, silt, stagnant pool, and mold,  
For microscopic animalculæ  
And living germs—in protoplasmic mass,  
For origin of the whole living world.  
And I have analyzed the light of stars  
And numbered their component elements,  
But nowhere found the secret I have sought—  
Whence I have come and whither I must go.

## CONVERSATION VI

### OUR DREAMS, ASPIRATIONS, AND CONJECTURES

WHERE we have questioned, doubted, and  
denied,  
How earnestly the fathers once believed !  
But how was it the fathers came to have  
Those notions of the supernatural ?  
What led them, at the first, to think themselves  
Immortal and descendants of the gods ?  
Was it a reminiscence of the soul ?—  
Gleams of the archetypal loveliness  
In previous stages of existence seen ?  
An intuition ? Or of Reason born  
With the Eternal Reason having part ?  
Was it from the phenomena of dreams  
Hallucination, trance, or sorcery ?  
A wish, a fancy, parent to the thought ?  
Fools ! childlike, would they thus defraud them-  
selves ?  
Thus passively submit to be deceived ?  
Or superstitious build their faith on dreams ?  
But how came they to dream those dreams ? And  
how  
Entrance all after with the vision seen ?

## Conversation VI

Our dreams are but reflections of things real:—  
One, looking in the water, sees oneself  
And all about the stream reflected there,  
But can the water mirror what is not ?  
And can it be that what the saintliest  
Believed, what most delights and satisfies,  
Comforts the most and most for good has won  
Through love, through self-denial, heroism,  
Is not so much as shadow or a dream ?

If for the Earth alone, for the Earth's end,  
Why has man shown such effort to maintain  
And to extend his moral dignity ?  
And whence his loyalty to duty, right,  
And principle, in scorn of consequence,  
Or exile, prison, or the stake and cross ?  
Why with those tireless energies endowed ?  
Or given those aspirations and ideals,—  
Love of the beautiful and spiritual ?  
The sense of God ? of Heaven ? the Perfect Life ?

Has the unconscious risen to these heights  
To fall again in lifeless, silent dust ?  
All living forms, when kosmically viewed,  
But superficial, fleet phenomena,  
Produced by solar radiation on  
The outer crust of cooling nebula ?  
Our reasoning, our memory, desire,  
And love, but wasted psychic energies ?  
This semblance of immortal and divine,  
Illusion only, cheating hope and faith ?—  
Voices that speak, that echo for a while

## The Colloquy

Till fainter grown and farther ones shall miss  
Of hearing them,—and Time, Eternity  
Speed on, and bear nor speech nor record thence ?  
And is the work of man less permanent  
Than that the coral builds within the deep,  
Doomed sooner as himself is to decay ?  
And meaningless his endless sacrifice,—  
The woe, the pain, the righteousness attained ;  
Sharing Earth's accidents, oblivion ;  
The Universe as little knowing us,  
As we know of the life of other worlds ?

Earth treasures long her gems, her minerals,  
Her ancient rifted crust, detritus, drift,  
Her earliest dead through immemorial years,  
As seen in sedimentary rocks, bogs, caves,—  
The monstrous skeletons of extinct beasts,  
The insect's gauze-like wings, the mollusk's shell,—  
Forms fossilized or in the rocks impressed,  
Even the carcass of the mastodon,  
Found perfect still in the Siberian ice.  
And is the power by which the Earth subsists,  
Less careful of the best that dwells on it ?  
Or Nature, holding without any loss  
Through ever-changing form her elements  
And energies, will she not keep conserved,  
As well, her immaterial agencies,—  
Our consciousness, our reason, memory ?  
And is it thinkable that consciousness  
Should ever perish in the Universe ?  
For stupid, blind, must be the demiurge  
To toil those million years in bringing forth



## Conversation VII

Intelligence, and then thus foolishly  
Destroy it just when it is perfected.

Did Nature, bringing us to life on Earth,  
Make but the poorest of all her attempts ?  
Or, having raised us to be wise as gods,  
Will she have power again to put us down ?  
And may there not be something greater yet  
Than consciousness, as we experience it ?

And may there not be an Intelligence,  
With whom our race had been a thought before  
The Earth and Sun had form, or found their course?  
That thought in us survive when Earth and Sun  
Fail of their energies and pale and die ?  
One conversant with every thought of man  
And all the vast procession of events ;  
Alike familiar with the flaming star,  
The atom and infinitesimal cell  
And with succession of phenomena  
Throughout the Astronomic Universe ?

If One thus conversant with all exists,  
Is it as person in relationship  
With every order of intelligence ?  
Of men the Father, Providence, and Judge ?  
Or is he dwelling in some mighty orb,  
Where round all spheres, the Universe revolves—  
A silent, lone, eternal majesty,  
Commanding by his laws, in silence given,  
To worlds, to elements, and sentient forms ?  
Or has he place in some ethereal realm,



## The Colloquy

High over all the deep cerulean vault  
Or the illimitable depths from which  
The dazzling stars look down on us at night,  
So beautiful, so lonely, sorrowful,  
Seen in the awful mystery of space ?  
Who is though all else ends, changeless amidst  
The changeful Earth and changeful Heaven above ?  
So isolate in his Infinity,  
His silence our weak praise may never break,  
Nor prayer for help, nor moan from sorrowing,  
Nor wail of agony that fills the Earth ?

Is he, in all, inherent, immanent,  
The visible, a vesture hiding him—  
His living garment, he expressed in it ?—  
His attributes as Paracelsus taught,  
Sown through the substance of the Universe  
That gathered slowly into types of things,  
The rudimentary organs, limbs, and nerves,  
Combining, struggling upward into one—  
The noble structure and the brain of man ?  
As boundless being, every lesser form  
Includes, while the minutest thing contains  
Him in completeness; God so dwelling in  
Whatever is and everything in him ?

Ourselves, if mind, if character survives  
These wasting tenements and world of change,  
What will we yet become ? What ventures make  
In the vast wilderness of glowing spheres ?  
Shall we, reborn, take mortal shape again  
Or live the shadow of our former selves ?

## Conversation VI

Or our true selves become, the masks removed ?  
As exiles from the Earth, will each one take  
His solitary way ? or from our own  
Will we some friendly recognition gain ?  
Or share Love's longing, sweet expectancy—  
Immortal union without change or death ?

The Spirit answers not, nor Providence,  
Nor voice from the invisible, unknown :  
Nor has experience yet acquainted us,  
Through all our research and imagining,  
With other than these natural verities,—  
Presentments of the varied modes of force ;  
As all that can be or that rules in all,  
An Infinite, Eternal Energy,  
Unaskable, unseeing, pitiless.

## CONVERSATION VII

ABOUT THE KEEPER OF THE INN, WITH OTHER  
INQUIRIES

### I

WHAT is our life ? a breath ? a force ? a flame ?  
Or is it an eternal principle ?  
Soul that out of the heaven of heaven first came,  
Or animated kosmic particle ?

And was our taking life a curse ? a doom ?  
A fall from some fair, sinless paradise ?  
For some past sin, sent down to world of gloom ?  
Or lowest born, to Godlike reason, rise ?

*Whence have we come ? Whereto our journeying ?*  
I asked of one who this sad answer gave :  
*We are Earth's generations, traveling*  
*Our mournful journey downward to the grave.*

Pilgrims, sojourners all like Abraham,  
In this vast inn where none the keeper knows ;  
Where never guest has written whence he came  
And none may tell the place to which he goes.

## Conversation VIII

Ah it is strange, that of the multitude  
Living on Earth, no one has ever known  
Him who keeps all, or clothes, or gives them food,  
Whom all would as their Lord and Father own!

### II

Not one here knows the author of his being,  
Nor one the providence that daily feeds  
All life. Nor know we if the one purveying  
Takes cognizance of us and of our needs.

For never has he sent one to reveal  
If we are known to him whose guests we are,  
Or if our praises reach him and appeal,  
Or if of any he has thought or care.

In prayer China's ancient king confessed :  
*Afar in the high Heaven God listens not.*  
And hears he one on Earth howe'er distressed  
Or changes ever any mortal's lot ?

If never seen by one and never known,  
And never one from him had answer yet,  
As well might we address a vacant throne  
Or have for God, inexorable Fate.

### III

We know not our own life ; what lies beyond  
Still less, for never to our questioning  
Does an unquestionable voice respond,  
Nor tidings from lost ones do any bring.

## The Colloquy

Still to the One Unknown we make our prayer,  
Look up to Heaven as to a far-off home :  
And still we say of them, *They must be there—*  
*Dear friends that come not, never, never come.*

*How fares it with the happy dead?* asks one.  
Fares well, who lives ? fares better, if no more ?  
If ever soul through Death's dark door passed on,  
Was it to good or ill ? To be no more

Is painless. Ah ! to what inquiry these ?  
To sorrows that await each one at birth,  
To life burdened with countless miseries,  
Nor solve *the riddle of this painful Earth.*

The most would live again ; and memory,  
Even of all Earth's sorrows and distress,  
They would keep green in Heaven through Endless  
Day,  
Slighting their kindest friend—Forgetfulness.

If memory retain each deed and thought,  
Our struggles, failures, losses, sense, and shame  
Of sin, our blighted hopes, then dearly bought  
What from oblivion most we would reclaim.

Or if forgotten all of former things,  
Our thoughts, our love, desire, companions,  
friends,  
Whate'er on Earth the highest pleasure brings,  
As well not live ; with these the longing ends.

## Conversation VIII

One said, *They are not into marriage given*  
*But as the angels are.* Will our loved there  
Pass us unknown? What then the bliss in Heaven,  
If strangers all, who once were kindred here?

*Unto the fathers gathered, epitaph*  
Aryan and Semite wrote, to history  
Trusting their dead with such brief paragraph—  
A name,—all else forgotten. Who were they?

What record made that time will not efface?  
What noble name or deed, that now appears  
In the collected annals of the race,  
Will be remembered hence ten thousand years?

*Shall in the grave thy love be known, in death*  
*Thy faithfulness?* Despair of Israel!  
Despair of man! who when the vital breath  
Quits him is dust like any cast off shell.

What dread Death brings! How dismal, dark the  
tomb!  
But Love in vision shows those robed in white,  
Who like the hosts that dissipate night's gloom,  
Illumine all with soft celestial light.

They live, dear ones! the vision fades away.  
Vanished the golden New Jerusalem!  
Our hearts beat low. Faith reassures; *They may*  
*Not come to us but we may go to them.*



## The Colloquy

And what is Love ? Faith ? Hope ? Ah what is  
this,—

Not moved by doubt, not hushed by argument ?  
Still promises reunion, Heaven's sweet bliss,—  
Trusts on and in its trust finds full content.

But woe is faith in nothing made secure,  
Bridge without mooring o'er a torrent laid,  
That doth confiding pilgrim onward lure,  
Where Death such certain pit for him has made.

### IV

If God has given promise to the just,  
That holy one shall not corruption see,  
Why with the beasts do they go down to dust,  
Sharing Death's ruin with them equally ?

If, in his providence, he cares for Earth,  
Numbers our hairs and counts each sparrow's fall,  
Cares he for withered germ or for misbirth,—  
The blighted life, marred, sinful, criminal ?

Does he, as creeds assert, the wicked doom  
To wail and woe, in ever-burning fire ?  
Forbid the thought ! Conjecture has no room  
To charge the Infinite with ceaseless ire.

If saving all, what will we yet attain,  
Progressing as most pleasing in his sight ?  
Will all at last the pure and perfect gain,  
And *highest, holiest, happiest delight* ?

## Conversation With

Or having found the Heavenly Paradise,  
Our dead, from those transcendent heights above,  
Do they look down on us with gladsome eyes,  
Or pitying or greeting with their love ?

Or wait they on enchanted shore till there  
We join them, now a disembodied race ?  
Or are their shades as mists borne on the air ?  
As unsubstantial, melting into space ?

Or merged their life in kosmic energy,  
Impersonal and inarticulate—  
Unconscious in their immortality ?  
Or in their graves the angel's trumpet wait ?

Or are they near us, whom we think so far  
Away ? Now lovelier than ever eyes  
Of flesh beheld ? Do our gross senses bar  
The pure from us ?—the heaven that so near lies ?

And if so near, why do they not make known  
Their presence ? us from grief and doubt relieve ?  
Ah, had our constancy been better shown !  
If knowing, them our acts must often grieve.

They, who erewhile with us on Earth have talked,  
Or sung to us their songs of joy and love,  
Or ate with us, or slept, or sat, or walked,  
If they are angels now in Heaven above,

## The Colloquy

Were they not angels here ? Ah, not to know  
What prize was ours, in friendship, to possess !  
That might have lighted them of many a woe,  
Heartache and tears and bitterest distress.

The poet argues : so it should have been,  
We keeping such pure, blessed company,  
As when the gods dwelt on the Earth with men,  
Or came or went oft on their starry way.

### V

Long the inquiry : answer there is none  
For none we ask the awful silence breaks—  
There is no voice from an eternal throne,  
No speech from one that from the dead awakes.

## CONVERSATION VIII

### THE SEER'S WARNING

I ENDED my discourse about the gods  
Who held their ancient thrones with absolute  
Authority some few brief periods,  
As by the æons measured, and then fell,  
Conquered, discarded—written of as myths.  
But my inquiry further still pursued  
Of man who rises out of mystery—  
Toils, suffers, into mystery sinks back;—  
Asking the learning, faith, and piety  
And reverend experience of mankind,  
To tell the meaning of our pilgrimage  
Here in the troubled order of the world.

Of those who in the Chapel met with me  
A seer was first to take my problems up.  
“ Yea, thou shalt know,” he said. “ It will be  
told  
To thee. Or thou unweariedly shalt seek,  
Till past eternities yield up to thee  
Their secrets and thy quickened sight receives,  
What now futurity hides from thy view.  
But earnest as thy quest, if at this hour

## The Colloquy

Thou couldst know all, long would be thy complaint—

Wisdom disquiets more than ignorance,  
E'en when it pleases him who learns. Moreo'er  
The real truths about our origin  
Are tales more fearful than the poets told  
Of Earth's dæmonic life and monstrous birth,—  
Dreadful, unspeakably, and awful truths.

If, as thy wish, thou couldst go back in time  
To the beginning of all life on Earth,  
Or dwelling place of the first human pair,  
There to hold converse with thine ancestry,  
Think not that they would have account for thee,  
Which would be to thy liking. Œdipos  
Routed the Sphinx, telling the dark-winged Muse  
The meaning of the riddle she put forth,  
Ending her crime; revealing, too, his own,  
Since Fate had doomed, through knowledge of  
himself,  
To bring on him the worst calamities.  
Such riddle still the Past propounds to us;  
Whoever tells the truth of what we are,  
Tells, ever afterward, a tale of woe."

## CONVERSATION IX

### THE CRITIC'S WARNING \*\* LIMIT OF HUMAN KNOWLEDGE

A CRITIC next took up the theme, but first,  
Pronounced Faith and Philosophy accursed;  
Blamed me for prying thus continually  
In this perplexing, nightly mystery.

“ Think’st thou,” said he, “ to open now the seal ?  
What past eternities have hid reveal ?  
Or in thy research happily to find  
What still eludes the wisest of mankind ?

Trust not thy dreams. It is not certainty  
Where but thine own conjecture pleases thee.  
Nor is truth fixed by creed or sacred name,  
Or that the source is hidden whence it came.

Nor take what the great multitudes receive  
As truth, nor what most pious ones believe;  
With such solemnity no fact is told,  
As myths and legends and traditions old.



## The Colloquy

The Greeks and Romans told so well their lies,  
We read them as authentic histories;  
Chaldeans, Hindus, Jews, their myths so framed  
That, *Very Word of God*, we have them named.

Fear, too, what learning boasts, presumption  
more:—  
Small yet is truth's accumulated store.  
But, without bidding, come those who would tell  
Of all there is in Heaven, of all in Hell.

Presuming priests, with stately liturgy,  
And form and phrase of gracious piety,  
And sanctimonious sermon and the look  
Of reverential awe on holy book,

Affect to know the supernatural  
And occult knowledge, hidden, spiritual,—  
What common minds could not unaided see:  
But ask of them—they know no more than we.

What know they, with all revelations given,  
Either of God of angel or of Heaven ?  
Of Time's beginning or creative plan  
Or origin or destiny of man ?

Nor seer, nor yet mahatmas, has revealed  
What the primordial energies concealed—  
Problems for all, which philosophic lore  
Resolves and leaves just where they were before.

## Conversation 11

One prays, *Tell us, kind Father, what are we?*  
Himself unto himself such mystery;  
Another asks the animals to give  
Account to him of how he came to live.

Another, scorning his poor mother, Earth,  
Asks the far stars where first his soul had birth;  
Scorning to die, asks if there is a place,  
Changeless, inhabited by deathless race.

Proud Science claims all knowledge as her own  
But sets her hedges close about the known;  
Gives the old ignorance another name,  
Its dark dominion leaving still the same.

And saintly and believing ones but see,  
As in a mirror, darkly, what will be;  
Behold in faith what will not come to sight,  
In hope what else were veiled in endless night."

## CONVERSATION X

### THE WORLD OF WRONG AND PAIN

**A**N eremite next took my problems up,  
First warning me as did the other two,  
Then of the World of Wrong and Pain conversed—  
Of Chance and Fate pronounced his deep complaint.

#### I.

“ As if Earth had not ill enough,” he said,  
“ Thou wouldst ask those in Heaven, those in the  
hells,  
If any there have voice, to tell their woes—  
Phantasms as here who think them egoisms;  
As some to Hades ventured long ago,  
The Ionian, Mantuan, and Florentine,  
Perchance to hear the wail of agony  
Of lost souls in that cavern dolorous,  
How full the lamentable tale as told  
In human history! or seen by us  
The universal spectacle of wrong,—  
The unrequited toil, the want, the grief,  
The pain, the vengeful and blood-thirsty strife—  
The fratricidal war, continuous

## Conversation 𐄂

From death of righteous Abel to this day.  
And heard since then in every land the voice  
Crying up from the ground,—myriad-voiced woe  
Of the wronged brotherhood ; those smitten down  
At sacrifice and at the daily toil,  
Oppressed, robbed, persecuted, slain in war.

And long will be thy task to reconcile  
The evils of the world with Providence ;  
These strivings, wrongs, crimes, cryings, agonies,  
Tortures, calamities, diseases, death.  
As Gautama once said : *If God exists  
And is all-powerful, he would not make  
A world so miserable ; or being good,  
Would not continue still its misery—  
Or not controlling all he is not God.*

Ah me, to take the troublous burden up !  
To tell the woe of this plague-smitten Earth !  
For life's few joys, what multitude of ills !  
Pain for each breath and peril for each step,  
Incessant toiling, care, anxiety,—  
The constant struggle to maintain ourselves,  
With Death close following upon our course.

I watch the people going from the mills,  
Men, women, youths ; impressed the little ones,  
All yielding to the weight of their employ :  
The shoulders stooped ; and twisted, bent the  
limbs,—  
The visage early roughened and deformed :  
Girls sick with cotton cough, the children dwarfed

## The Colloquy

And mentally impoverished through life.  
I watch those in the mines, on public works,  
At furnaces,—the stokers on our ships,  
Enduring what no gain will compensate;  
And men in copper works, lead, acid, glass,—  
At blasting, grinding, polishing, whose trade,  
Exhausting, poisoning, cuts short their years.  
Others have their continual drudgery,  
Labor that will not quit their hands or minds.  
Poor souls! beginning day with weariness,  
Too weary they, to rest when night is come.  
Poor, weary, worn-out creatures! whom no night  
Brings rest, nor day the dawn of liberty:—  
Thus do the millions buy the right to breathe.

Behold the masses in their poverty!  
Their moral darkness! blighting ignorance!  
The poorer ones in sodden misery,—  
Their houses filthy, leaking rookeries,  
Their clothing, rotten, falling from their limbs,  
Their scanty fuel never warming them,  
Their stinted and insipid aliment,  
Keeping alive but little nourishing:—  
Men, courageless and aimless, at their work  
Or gone to drink, to crime, to savagery;  
Women and children to what resource brought!  
Yet sometimes wondering if one can be  
Poor and not wicked and of all despised.

Or once survey those sinks of pestilence,  
The city's shame and curse, where people crowd

## Conversation 𐄂

Like swinish multitude, the sexes mixed,—  
Where all diseases breed or enter in,  
Where misery brings forth as naturally  
As slimy creatures crawl out of the mire;—  
Whereto all degradations find their way,  
Where moral lapse and fall seek covering,  
Where hard misfortune turns for company  
And vice and villainy have hiding place;—  
Men, women, children, in this horrid drift,  
Merging their individuality.

One dying, whispers, it may be to God,  
To lover somewhere, father, mother, friend,  
Clutching convulsively, as if to grasp  
Some presence that is not—that should be there;  
Fair as Diana once, a specter now,  
Emaciated so the comely form,  
Withered the hands and sunk the full-orbed breasts,  
Wasted of bloom the cheeks and hollowed deep,—  
A face where all misfortunes limn themselves,  
All horrors, all distresses, miseries,  
And with the dying, love-forsaken one,  
The drunken, brawling, coarse ones and profane;  
Bedraggled wretches, from lewd orgies come,  
And night hags, resting from their revelry.  
And men—but why call one I saw a man?  
Senseless he lay with drink, putredinous;  
His face so deeply pitted that it seemed  
Like pumice or the comb of bumblebees,—  
Hideous wretch! dogs would not lick his sores.  
Ah me, what beings these! Hell has not worse;—  
For nowhere could more hellish realm be found,



## The Colloquy

More wicked or tormented populace,  
Than in the city's haunts of vice and crime,—  
Abortive, monstrous, leprous, ulcerous!  
As if all humors of the social mass  
Were there drawn out, to sicken and defile.  
Such are these slums that gather all this kind,  
The refuse of the race and infamous,—  
Sots, vagrants, felons, harlots, panderers,  
Devoid of shame; to wallow in Sin's mire,  
Their one delight—so to profane delight.  
Such the lapsed masses and dehumanized,  
As one has written: *Damned into the world  
And not born into it.* And this we owe  
Them in apology: these wretches are  
What we had been, cast in their rueful lot,—  
As we had been not bred to woes refined.  
And yet, most sorrowful of all to tell:  
Through this degraded life and criminal,  
Far generations will have misery.

How sad the lot of those inheriting  
A weakened constitution or the lack  
Of vital force which predisposes them,  
Either in mind or body to disease,  
To gnawing appetite and every vice,  
Making their lives a burden and a curse!  
Those to misfortune doomed, to poverty,  
Obscurity, and deprivation; those  
To shameful bondage born, to caste, to ban,  
And to inferior family and race;  
Whom color, hair, nose, lips, and eyes debar  
From social privilege and right,—race-marked

## Conversation ୫

By Nature which long generations bear  
And suffer for; degraded and disowned,—  
Hated, despised for very helplessness,  
Their weakness bringing to them enemies.

Sad lot to live under despotic rule,  
Or dwell in an inhospitable clime!  
How wretched life is in the Polar World!  
Scarcely less wretched under Tropic Sun.  
How miserable the life of savages  
And not less miserable the life of those,  
Inhabiting the wastes of ancient lands.  
What is life worth in Africa? How much  
In Asia? What boon has it conferred  
Upon the naked superstitious tribes,  
And cannibal, of the Dark Continent—  
Spoiled, hunted, sold as slaves through all the years?  
What boon on over-peopled India,  
Whose hungry, houseless millions only wait  
The time of famine and of pestilence,  
Certain to come and sweep them all away?  
What boon upon the millions taking life,  
Who come into the world but to go out?

How sad their lot, who bear deformity  
Of person or the loss of faculties!  
Think of the million living who are blind,  
To whom the rising and the setting Sun  
Are hidden and all Nature's beauties veiled.  
With them the numbers, inarticulate,  
And deaf to all the music of the world.

## The Colloquy

Yet sadder lot—the many thousands more,  
Bereft most piteously of reason's light.

E'en Nature lays upon the weaker ones  
The heavier burden while rewarding least.  
How disproportionate the lot of sex!  
See woman in unintermittent round  
Of toil, of drudgery, of serving, care,  
And, in her office of maternity,  
Weighted so heavily in race of life!  
Each child born, brings her to the gates of Death,  
And men in savagery, in barbarism,  
Or profligate or vicious, add the weight  
Of their unthrift and heartless cruelties,  
While men in Christian lands deny her, still,  
Emancipation from barbaric wrong.  
What brutal subjugation she has borne,  
From immemorial past till now, through force  
Of custom and religion and the law!  
And in her awful service to her kind,  
Put under blame and ceremonial ban.  
In Asia, unwelcome at her birth,  
Enslaved in marriage and in widowhood  
Accursed; in age outcast, in death unwept.  
In other lands, how slavish still her toil!  
How grudgingly the recompense bestowed!  
In Belgium and in the Netherlands,  
Serving with men at loading cars and ships;  
In Germany, yoked to the plow with cows  
And harnessed with the dogs to market carts,  
In Alpine Oberland myself have seen  
Swiss girls, dressed in the roughest male attire,

## Conversation 𐌆

Engaged as muleteers, at herding goats,  
At harvesting the grass and bearing it  
Down from those lonesome heights and perilous.  
And seen in Italy, France, Hungary,  
The women carrying their monstrous tubs  
Of compost to the vineyards, up long flights  
Of terraces and steep; the overseers,  
Or those employing, giving their commands  
With coarsest oaths; as wages, paid to them  
Such pittance, it would shame to give;—the while  
Delighted that the grapes were fattening  
For richest vintage,—choice for festal day  
Or epicure, or bacchanal's delight.  
And seen the Indian women clear the land,  
Plant it and till it with the woman's stick,  
And seen them pitch their tents and take them up  
And dress the animals for food; their lords  
Preferring war, the chase and idleness.  
And how unequally is woman's sin  
And frailty weighed with that of man's! her love  
Betrayed, deceived, not counting in excuse.  
And that which shames the good if they but speak—  
Her life made sacrifice to lust of man.  
What story here, if one should tell in full  
Woman's subjection, sorrow, martyrdom!  
Not only of those who have made complaint,—  
Not Hagar whom the patriarch cast forth  
Into the wilderness of Beersheba;  
Not Trojan women, in inhuman haste  
From their slain husbands, fathers, brothers, borne  
To endless slavery and exile; not  
Hypsipile whom Jason left forlorn;

## The Colloquy

Not Ariadne's nor Medea's wrongs,  
Themselves invited or themselves avenged;  
Not Dido's grief when Æneas put off  
From port of Carthage; not the slighted love  
Of Sappho; not neglect of that fair witch,  
Flora, whom Pompey had for mistress; not  
Brunhilde, cursing Siegfried's treachery;  
Not loneliness of Wordsworth's Margaret,  
Nor agony of her beguiled by Faust,  
But wrongs of those that we ourselves have seen,  
And woes and piteous abandonment.

## II

How greatly wrong and villainy prevail  
In all the course of human history!  
So little men respect each other's rights,  
Their feelings, their opinions and desires.  
Not with forbearance, charity, or love,  
But with unfairness and severity  
Extreme, they treat their kind. How like the  
beasts!  
Each butting, tusking, scrambling to be first,  
Trampling the weaker and destroying them.  
Sharp wit compasses quite simplicity,—  
The selfish and rapacious, like the wolves,  
Hunt the defenseless and unfortunate  
To dispossess and eat their substance up.  
See speculators and monopolists,  
Through fraud and robbery, have palaces  
And equipage of kings, while honest toil



## Conversation Ⅹ

Has scarcely wherewith to be fed and clothed.  
See demagogues have place and patronage,  
And statesmen and economists, neglect!  
See scoundrels crowned as kings while patriots,  
With heavy hearts, go into banishment!  
See fawning mediocrity at court  
With title, ribbon, fringe, and coat of arms,  
Men of preëminent ability,  
Neglected, persecuted, and prescribed!  
See charlatans applauded, honest men  
And wise, denied the liberty to teach!  
See men, like pillars, standing all alone,  
For standing firmly in the time of wrong!  
See rival despots and proud potentates,  
At strife for the dominion of the world,  
In massacre and ruin triumphing,  
And holy men and just—those loving peace,  
Hidden in cloisters, caves, and desert wilds!  
See Dante, wandering a mendicant,—  
Eating the bitter bread of beggary,  
At Florence, privileged the venal horde,  
Thievish, contentious, bestial, bacchanal,  
To gorge and revel in her palaces!  
Saintly Savonarola hanged and burned,  
The worldly Borgia in St. Peter's chair!  
See Bobadilla, taking his command,  
Columbus, the discoverer, in chains!  
Nero invested with imperial power  
And Epictetus sold in slavery!  
Cæsar in triumph, Cato overthrown!  
Small wits at Athens supplicating gods,  
And Sokrates, the wise, condemned to death!



## The Colloquy

And see incestuous Herodias  
And wanton Silome gain their request,  
The righteous seer, for telling them their sins,  
Murdered remorselessly! Tiberius,  
See on the throne, and Jesus on the cross!

And Liberty—it is a toilsome tale,  
Often defeat, submission, overthrow;  
Cell, dungeon, bullet, gibbet, banishment!  
And right—how deaf the powers to its claims!  
See how the masses still are manacled  
And crushed by their long years of slavery,  
Ancestral disabilities and wrongs!  
In Ireland, see evicted tenantry!  
In India, in Egypt, see the poor  
Robbed of their toil by wealth and government!  
Like cattle, see Bulgarian peasants chained  
And driven to cultivate the Sultan's farms!  
Or see, in Persia, the tax gatherers  
Extort their annual tribute with the lash!  
See Russian men and women on their way,  
In constant throngs to exile journeying!  
See peonage and caste in Mexico,  
And Kaffir serfdom in South Africa;  
In free America, race prejudice,  
In Europe, class division, social rank,  
Denying liberty and right to most!  
See Madagascar, Cuba, Crete, those isles  
So fair, so rich, by robber nations ruled!  
Hawaii, once the missionary's pride,—  
Hawaii, see, the missionary's shame!  
See reigning o'er the greater part of Earth,

## Conversation Ⅹ

Titled feudalities and monarchies,  
Holding their rule against their subjects' will,  
Imposed by might of arms, by arms sustained!  
And see the greedy, jealous dynasties  
And cunning diplomats at their intrigues,  
The stronger, planning conquest of the weak!  
Even in democratic governments,  
How hardly, often, Liberty has fared!  
Neglected by the ones it benefits,  
Or seeming friends have treacherously sold.  
How shamelessly the men of ancient Greece  
Took bribes and turned them traitors, enemies  
To Liberty and to their country's good!  
In Rome, what envyings and jealousies  
Among Republicans! and how corrupt  
The suffrages! In the Italian states,  
Spain, Poland, Hungary, the Netherlands,  
And Germany, what lack of unity,  
Coherency among the Liberals!  
In France what revolutions, anarchy!  
For the French populace is like a snake  
That in hard conflict turns and bites itself.  
In the American republics, now  
Experimenting with self-government,  
See the conservators of Liberty,  
The middle classes, neither rich nor poor,  
Encroached upon by aristocracies  
Of wealth and corporate monopoly,  
On the one hand, while on the other one,  
Menaced by poverty and ignorance,—  
The purchasable masses, destitute  
Of honor, principle, and patriotism.

## The Colloquy

As thou, thyself, when asking us didst show,  
Savage ferocity and ignorance,  
Hold wide domain,—a people seldom ruled  
By the consensus of the competent.  
What lawless, bestial libertines! what brutes!  
What fiends on Earth, the Spartan kings, who reigned  
After Lykurgos' time! detested line!  
Who put to death their subjects, without trial,  
Subverted laws and customs of the land,  
And violated women, claiming though  
Their crowns and thrones as given by right divine.  
And Asian monarchs, from remotest times,  
What despots all and beastly sensualists!  
So many murder pens, their capitals!  
Their palaces, so many brothelries!  
All, on their subjects, grievous burdens laid,  
As slaves, drove them with whips to fight in war,  
And under lash to build their monuments,  
Walled cities, temples, gorgeous palaces:  
By least suspicion, provocation moved,  
To put the worthiest to death, and each  
Accession to the throne occasion made  
For foulest treachery and murdering.  
Few kings have won a place in memory  
For wise, humane, and equitable rule,  
But tyrants, vengeful, greedy, profligate,  
Fill the long scroll with their inhuman deeds.

With wealth and place, how selfish, arrogant,  
Is man! What despot, and how hard of heart!  
What his imperiousness upon the throne,  
His haughtiness, commanding on the field!

## Conversation 𐌆

How proud in time of victory—when in  
Triumphal entry or procession seen,  
As Roman consuls once and generals  
Returning to the world's metropolis!  
What horrible magnificence adorned  
The Persian kings! the Babylonian!  
Who cared alone for sensual delight;—  
Spending their days in soft luxurious ease,  
Or plundering or taking fierce revenge,  
Or glorying in their despotic sway.  
What the display, the pomp, extravagance,  
Of Roman Cæsars when they ruled the Earth!  
Or the Byzantine emperors, on thrones  
Of gold and ivory, on white bears' skins  
Reclined and lavished with all luxuries  
Of beggared subjects and of prostrate states!  
E'en in their tombs, Mycenæ's kings and queens  
In an incomparable splendor laid;  
Wearing in death their sumptuous robes of state,  
Covered in ornament with plates of gold;  
Their golden diadems, rings, bracelets, belts,  
Baldricks, and brooches radiant with gems,  
Placed on them, as in life, and by their sides,  
Their inlaid weapons, curiously adorned,  
Lodged with them, in their costly sepulchers.  
In what barbaric splendor, were arrayed  
Rameses, Xerxes, Cræsus, Solomon,  
Nebuchadnezzar, Asurbanipal,  
Imperial Kubla Khan in Kambalu,  
The Aztec war-chiefs and Peruvian,—  
Their precious persons, covered up with gems  
And weighted with their ornaments of gold.

## The Colloquy

As gorgeously the Mogul dynasties,  
India's rajahs, sultans, emperors;—  
He on the peacock throne and wearing crown  
Shining with Kohinoor and he who built  
Taj Mahal for his wife, a sepulcher.  
So Spanish grandees of the earlier time  
Bedecked themselves with every finery:  
Their gorgeous villas, nestling on the banks  
Of fairest rivers and o'erhanging them,  
And shrouded in the vine and olive trees;  
And hung the spacious chambers and the halls  
With Syrian and Persian tapestries,  
The floors laid well with purple rugs, where guests  
Reclined; and serving them, their hosts of slaves,  
With dancing girls and minstrels to delight;  
While starving peasants, in their filthy rags,  
Swarming with vermin, begged about the gates.  
And what the lavish grandeur, opulence,  
Now shown by the Old World's nobility,  
Rich for entail of vast estates in land  
And palaces and products of the arts!  
As grand the New World's aristocracies,  
Rich for the robbery of others' toil,  
And rivaling the Orient in display.

What wrongs the multitude of men endure,  
That one may have his pleasure, wealth, and  
power!  
Wrong and oppression, all, that governments  
May be invested with authority!  
And what surrendering of primal rights  
To institutions of society!



## Conversation Ⅹ

And what man's wrongs, the sufferings endured,  
Through wasteful and exterminating war!  
The indescribable atrocities  
Of armies taking their revenge, as seen  
At siege of Azoth, Ilium, Carthage, Tyre;  
Saguntum, Nineveh, Jerusalem,  
At Babylon, Seleucia, Syracuse,  
Delhi, Otrar, Samarkand, Nishabur,  
And Rome, when Gauls, Goths, Vandals plundered  
it.

O, who may tell the human butchery  
Within those cities' walls? Most horrible!  
Most lamentable and unspeakably  
Dreadful! Yet is the chance of war the one  
Enduring theme of bards, in interest  
The first to all mankind since Time began:  
And held as spectacles the most sublime,  
The pitiless assault and wasting flames.

See what wide desolations mark the paths  
Of conquerors, who, for the ruin made,  
Imperishable names and glory gained!  
Of these what else than havoc which they wrought,  
Has one thought to relate? This is the tale  
Told of Sennacherib, when ravaging  
Fair Elam's plains and Babylonia;  
This, of Kambyzes laying Egypt waste;  
This, of the Persians when invading Greece;  
This, of the armies led by Gengis Khan.  
This, of the Portuguese adventurers,  
Scouring the coasts of Africa for slaves,  
Gold, ivory, and oil—or they sailed East



## The Colloquy

Where Ind and the Malaysian spiceries  
Offered them gain. This, of the Spaniards, crazed,  
Infuriated, in their search for gold;  
Wasting the goodly Indies and the rich  
And populous Peru and Mexico,—  
So many millions bringing to distress,  
To lamentation, shame, and bitter death:  
As none before afflicted, robbed, reviled,  
Branded, dismembered, roasted, mangled, stabbed,  
Whipped, racked, and famished, dashed against  
the rocks;  
In sport beheaded, scalded with hot oil,  
Ripped them alive and hunted them with dogs,  
With tortures, maimings more unnamable,  
Thus fertile infinite their cruelties;—  
Christians, in name, in hellish deeds, archfiends,  
Licentious, villainous beyond compare.  
And this of our Teutonic ancestors,  
Or Saxons, Angles, Frisians, Jutes, or Danes,  
Barbaric tribesmen, who had their delight  
In drink, carouse, rapine, theft, piracy,  
And never ceasing war upon their kind;—  
Who, where they went, spared naught; robbed,  
burned, and killed,  
And left behind irreparable waste;  
Their two-mast barks, such terror on the seas,  
That feeble folk put in their litany,  
*Deliver us from fury of the Jutes;*  
This, of the barbarous Israelites, who warred  
With Eglon, Sisera, Abimilech,—  
Hewed Ammon hip and thigh from Aroer,  
By Arnon into Minneth; those that smote

## Conversation Ⅹ

The Amalekites, from Havelah to Shur ;  
And this, of that fierce prophet who cut down  
Agag, their king,—that would not spare of them  
Woman or child, nor one of flock or herd.

Even Religion, lauded as the gift  
Of Heaven, has brought its many ills to men,—  
Hatred, revenge, intolerance, war, death.  
See older sects at persecuting new  
And Orthodox at burning Heretics !  
Ah me, what awful tortures men applied,  
And maimed and killed in name of the dear Lord !  
For worshiping and for opinion's sake,  
What woes unutterable men have endured !  
*Woe ! woe ! to the inhabitants of Earth,*  
The angel cries in the apocalypse,  
Prophetic of the tribulations brought  
By persecutions and the holy wars.  
And of all despotisms the world has known  
Religious orders have maintained the worst.  
What tyrant, conqueror, or autocrat,  
E'er held o'er man oppressive sovereignty,  
Like Brahman and the Roman hierarchs ?  
And where has villainy such cunning shown,  
As in pontifical authority ?  
What ready pretexts former priesthoods found,  
To take the lives and property of men !  
And in the Middle Ages, when the Church  
Held in the world complete supremacy,  
So many consecrated pirates were  
Its priests, its bishops, cardinals, and popes.  
And priesthoods, doctrines, worship—sects by what

## The Colloquy

Devices, costly, fraudulent maintained!  
And what the methods by which councils wrought  
Their creeds infallible?—at Chalcedon?  
Constantinople? Nice and Ephesus?  
Not piety prevailing nor the truth,  
Not love of man, not lowly Christ's commands,  
But selfish interests and partisan  
Of rival prelates, scheming emperors.  
And what the woes, the pains men have endured  
Through superstitious fear! what martyrdoms  
From penances Ecclesiastics imposed!  
How bloody, filthy, and obscene the cults  
Through which our modern faiths had their descent!—

Common to Heathendom in olden time,  
To Canaanite and Israelite alike.  
What horrid worship seen in Africa!  
Once seen as horrible in Mexico,  
When Aztec priests tore out the human heart,  
Yet palpitating, gave it to the gods.  
And what self-abnegation, torturing,  
Starving, deforming, mutilating seen  
In the monastic rules,—asceticisms,  
Brahman or Buddhist, Christian, Taoist,  
Mohammedan or Russian celibate!

In name of Justice, too, how terrible  
The cruelties inflicted upon men!—  
Lash, knout, thong, brand, knife, stock, chain,  
pillory,  
The dungeon, gallows, stake, rack, crucifix,—  
The torture still applied in many lands,

## Conversation Ⅹ

Some of them counted Christian, civilized,—  
That of all crimes, the darkest, wrongfulest,  
Are penalties that Justice has imposed.

### III

Humanity, how careless of thine own!  
And how indifferent to suffering!  
Thine are the poor of every land and time,  
Helot, plebeian, peasant, serf, and churl,  
Who toil and struggle—never to possess—  
The multitudinously burdened ones,  
Who sink beneath the miseries of life.  
Thine are the grimy workers in the mines,  
Thine, the pale sickly children of the mills,  
And thine, the robbed, the wronged, the unavenged,  
Enslaved, imprisoned,—weak, pressed to the wall.  
Thine, the poor exiles broken with despair,  
And thine, the orphan and apprenticed child  
And homeless waif, whom no one loves or helps.  
Thine, the deserted wife, and maid, and her,  
Not less thine own, whom thou wouldst cast away.  
Thine, the innumerable multitudes,  
Who lived and perished in the ages past,  
Sensual, superstitious, from the brutes  
Little removed, forgotten, nameless all.  
Thine, too, the thousands who were lately slain  
In English massacres, in the Soudan,  
In Kabul and in Kandahar, or since  
Shot down in Matabeleland, where men,  
Poor savages, we call them, did defend,  
With their rude weapons, to the last, their homes;

## The Colloquy

So offering their bodies to the arms  
Of European science—patriots,  
Deserving better, as the thousands more  
Falling before their conquerors. And thine,  
The Sandwich Islanders, South Africans,  
The Indians, Maoris, Australians,  
Now perishing before the Christian world.  
Thine, Egypt's fellahin,—those conscripts thine,  
Whom the old Asiatic despotisms  
Force into battle, and whom Christian Europe  
Leads forth like dumb beasts to the slaughter-field.

*The fittest live*, our latest science claims,  
But often the unfittest ones survive,—  
The ignoble, the thriftless, listless mass,  
And those vile herds, venal, unprincipled,  
That serve in the support of despotism.  
Of these, who were the fittest to survive,  
The martyred ones, or the inquisitors ?  
Of those engaged in war, the men who fell,  
Or they that lived continuing the race ?  
Of men of Greece, who were the worthiest  
To live, Pausanias and Hippias,  
Or slain at Marathon ? Thermopylæ ?  
Plataea ? Salamis ? Eurymedon ?  
The bravest men of all have died in war,  
The noblest in heroic sacrifice.  
And in the centuries of human strife,  
How oft the worst have lived ! As one has told  
Us of the Middle Ages when the Church  
Of Rome, all-dominant, to cloisters sent  
The gentlest ones, most studious, beautiful,—



## Conversation Ƨ

To martyrdom, the thoughtful, liberal,  
While coarse and rude and base of intellect  
Married and multiplied their meaner kind.

As thou, thyself, hast clearly shown to us,  
Seldom do the best qualities of men  
Pass down in an uninterrupted line.  
But long the genealogies of crime,  
Of vagrancy, of vice, of villainy.  
Even where men have striven to preserve  
Distinctive quality or nobleness,  
What sore discomfiture has come to them  
Sooner or later in the line of heirs !  
Few dynasties have added to the fame  
Of those who founded them ; through long descent  
Losing the splendor of their nobler names :  
So Kadmos', Pelop's and Achæmenes',  
Antiochus', the line of Ptolemy,  
Of Constantine and house of Medici.  
And few the families that keep intact  
A goodly lineage. What earl or lord  
That honors now his titled ancestry ?  
And what illustrious man has had an heir  
Worthy his name ? Not Moses, Perikles ;  
Not Cæsar, Alexander, Hannibal,  
Aurelius, Charlemagne, Napoleon ;  
Not Cromwell, Washington, nor Bolivar,—  
For childless, some of these, or having sons,  
Bequeathing them inferior qualities.  
As Landor put in Argive Helen's mouth  
The wisdom of the ancients:—*Seldom bears  
A beauteous mother beauteous progeny,*



## The Colloquy

*Nor fathers often see such semblances  
As Paris in the face of Corythos.*  
And genius, in what land is its descent ?

Nor does the wrong, the pain, and misery  
Lie upon man alone. Could bees and ants  
Relate the inner life of hive and hill,  
A revelation would be given us  
Of discord, war, misrule, and treachery,  
As sad as ever man has chronicled.  
And could the field and wood relate to us  
The story of their life, or spring, or brook,  
Or the denuded hills, what long account  
And woeful, of exterminating strife!  
And could the wingéd nations of the air,  
The animals that roam the wilderness,  
The fishes of the sea, tell of themselves,  
What story! piteous, calamitous,—  
The long lament of wrong and misery  
During the evolutionary course  
That made them what they are and us with them.  
Each drop of water that evaporates,  
Ends countless lives. If we could know the griefs—  
The unrequited hopes, ambitions, loves,  
At wrecking of those tiny crystal worlds,  
What romance, tragedy of our own race  
Would equal these in mournful, pitiful ?

True, the Apologist and Optimist  
Find good in evil or a recompense.  
But these should see the dominance of Sin,  
The scornful mastery of Chance and Fate

## Conversation §

And the uninterrupted reign of Wrong.  
Or they should see how Might and Cunning spoil  
The weak, unfortunate, and ignorant ;—  
Should look on the possessions of the rich,  
Their palaces, their equipage, attire,  
Then on the rags and hovels of the poor ;  
Or see how insolently Property  
Looks down on its creators at their toil.  
Should once pass through a prison in the East,  
Through Europe's castle-dungeons underground,  
Through torture-chamber of Inquisitors,  
Or through a Roman amphitheater  
Where murdering of men and animals  
Was made a pleasure for the multitudes.  
And they should see the dreadful instruments  
So fiendishly devised for torturing :—  
The agonies intolerable feel  
Of one in spasms of hydrophobia ;  
Once look in Ungolino's hunger-cell,  
Once in Calcutta's horrible Black Hole.  
They should have seen the surgeon's art before  
The use of anesthetics, or have seen  
The physiologist experiment  
Dissecting living animals. Or had  
They seen the Greeks and Hebrews worshiping,  
And older Heathendoms throughout the world,  
When priests were killing for the sacrifice.  
And they should read about the French Bastile,  
How Tyranny and Treachery had filled  
Its loathsome cells, nor Justice visited ;  
Of London Tower where the noblest blood,  
For centuries, was spilt. They should have crossed,

## The Colloquy

With the condemned, o'er Venice' Bridge of Sighs.  
Or they should see the market-place for slaves,  
In Moorish Tangier or in the Soudan ;  
Once only, look down in a slave-ship's hold,  
Bearing her human freight across the main ;  
In Equatorial Africa survey  
An Arab caravan, its merchandise,  
A human herd whose blood, whose bleaching bones,  
Mark the sad trail through many a long degree.  
And they should see an exile prison-house  
In Semipalatinsk, Ulbinkst, Irkutsk,  
In Krasnoyarsk, Tomsk, Ust Kamenogorsk,  
Or fare with convicts on their weary march,  
With suspects, in the far Trans-Baikal mines,  
In Yakut oolooses, distributed  
Under the Asiatic pole of cold.  
And they should see the pathway of the storm,  
The flood's destructive course or lava stream,  
The stifling shower of ash and earthquake's waste ;  
Or look upon a famine-stricken land,  
A city desolated by the plague,  
Or walk a wreck-strewn shore, a Javan plain,  
Paved over with its whitening skeletons ;  
And they should walk about a battle-field  
Strewn with the dead, the wounded left to die.  
And they should know the sorrow of the world,—  
The awful disproportion that exists  
Between the want and struggle of all life  
And momentary joys and comforts found ;  
Should know the worthlessness of every aim  
In life—life's emptiness and its despair.

## Conversation 𐄂

War, slavery, storm, famine, pestilence,  
Afford the answer to the Optimist,  
As does the moth, singed by the candle's flame,  
The worm, the insect trodden under foot,  
The firstling killed, the bird robbed of its mate,—  
Each broken troth and every cruelty,  
Each death preventable, each martyrdom,  
Each unjust sentence and imprisonment,  
And every wrong there is and evil done——”

Here interrupting his complaint I said,  
“ Thy knowledge of the overburdened world,  
How full! But care thou dost not overlook  
Abundance of the good and beautiful,  
Nor what from first apparently designed  
All things to serve some necessary end.”

Resuming the complaint again, he said,  
“ Thyself hast shown us that the evil keeps  
Its even pace with good, nor yet hast found  
Revealed on Earth omniscient providence.  
Capricious Nature sends us good or ill,  
Or help or harm, thoughtless of consequence.  
Design that makes the lily grow and rose  
And gives the nightingale its power of song,  
Sows wide the troublous weeds; makes tumors grow  
And sports its terrible monstrosities;  
Brings forth its creatures fierce and venomous,—  
Shark, serpent, scorpion, and centipede,  
With legions of annoying parasites;  
As well as fertile land and cheerful scene,—  
The useful, pleasurable, and beautiful,

## The Colloquy

Creates the desert and the wilderness,  
The desolations of the Polar world  
And airless, uninhabitable Moon;  
Sends the swift hurricane and thunderbolt  
And rends the Earth and lays its dwellings waste.  
And what disparity, as thou hast seen,  
Comparing the enormous waste of means  
With scantiness of the results obtained!  
Countless the germs which Nature blights and  
wastes;—

Rears from a million seeds, a single tree,  
From spawn of million eggs, one full-grown fish:—  
To accidents exposing all that lives,  
To foes, to unsubduable disease;  
Constructs this world of contests, rivalries,—  
Where no one makes advance or ever gains,  
But wounds or disappoints another one,  
Where none possesses aught desirable,  
But others envy or detract from it,—  
Where every one born to the strife goes forth  
To kill another or himself is killed.

Where one succeeds in life, a thousand go  
Despairing, broken-hearted, to the grave.  
Like the Crusaders going forth to win  
The Holy Land and glory and renown,—  
Strong men and venturesome and loving war,  
Impelled by mightiest enthusiasm,  
But fell out on the way, in sad retreat,  
Or perished in the strife or miserably  
In prisons, desert wastes, came to their end.  
Or Munger's piteous plaint the most take up,



## Conversation 𐌆

That in this world our bread is hard to earn  
And love impossible for us to keep.

And we—how seldom with ourselves at peace!  
The foes within are more than foes without,  
For, not in outward wretchedness alone  
Of this unnumbered confraternity  
Of helpless sufferers, is seen the curse  
Of life. It is in greater misery  
Within—of saddened and despairing ones,  
And guilty ones, involved in sin and crime.  
Each memory a painful secret holds,  
Each one experience had, which told in full,  
Would add another Iliad of woes.  
Life, like a knotted skein of silk, unwinds  
With stubborn tangles to the very end.  
How truly has the Bible said of man,  
*His days are sorrows and his travail grief.*

The Muse relates the sorrows of the world  
In grief of these,—of her in Ramah heard,  
Weeping, refusing to be comforted,  
And Hecuba, heard in her loud lament,  
And wild Ænone's wail in Ida's wood;  
Demeter, seeking lost Persephone,  
And Niobe in tears, and Psalmist king,  
Bewailing Absalom, his wilful son,  
And Mary at the cross where Jesus died.

The Thrakians mourned when one was born to them,  
And when one died had feast and merry day,  
So grieved they for the soul imprisoned here,



## The Colloquy

So glad were they when it had found release.  
And Mexicans, when they baptized a child,  
Prayed that the gods might guide it safely through  
The world of pain, affliction, penitence;  
While men of faith, who hoping for the best,  
Have comfort only in the thought that Earth,  
With all its evils, soon must come to end.

For what wise man, to contemplation given,  
That has not had occasion to lament  
Deeply the wretched nature of the world ?  
Sage Heraklitus wept continually  
Over the sins and miseries of men ;  
And men, in every age, to sorrow brought,  
To pain, or weary of the strife, or led  
To fear their mental powers were in decay,  
Have ended their own lives ; thus Samson, Saul,  
And Cato, Zeno, Otho, Cassius,  
And Marcellinus and Empedokles,  
Longinius, Atticus, Lucretius,  
Silius Italicus, Diodorus,  
Petronius and Geronteus' wife ;  
Brutus, Cleombrotus, Demosthenes,  
And he, who sung the hymn to Jupiter,—  
An Optimist, a Universalist,  
Yet wearied of his life and ended it.  
Thomas à Kempis thought it misery  
Enough for one to live upon the Earth,  
As Orphic hymns had taught and Sibyls once.  
And so Erasmus,—burdened with his life,  
His only wish was to be done with it.  
The Buddhist seeks Nirvana ; troublous life

## Conversation 𐆆

Denies and death a joyous welcome gives.  
Of martyrs, most expressed their gratitude  
To those around for their deliverance,  
Thanking and paying executioners  
For doing them so great a benefit.

Our worship is the sorrowful, the woes  
Of man personified and deified.  
The Church was founded on the suffering  
Of Jesus—as on him man's great guilt lay,  
Or he endured the agony and cross:  
In monumental ceremony these  
She keeps in memory; with these, the pain  
And tribulation since the world began.

## IV

How helpless man! the sport of Destiny!  
His coming, like a shipwrecked mariner,  
Defenseless, naked, cast up by the surf  
On unknown and inhospitable coast.  
In infancy how weak! how pitiable!  
May only cry or feebly creep his way,  
This little outcast in the infinite.  
In youth he is cast off as is the herb  
Before the scythe; in manhood's strength cut down;  
Or passing the meridian of life,  
How soon old age comes on and heavily  
Time lays his burdens! sluggish grows each sense,  
As one by one, life's energies ooze out.  
Desire and hope fail him, and he has left  
Only this bundle of decrepitude:

## The Colloquy

The bended form, racked by disease and toil,—  
Bronzed visage, corrugated, shriveled up;  
Eyes dim of sight, the ears as dumb to speech;  
Palsied the touch, and dulled the sense of taste,  
Of smell; and loosened or low-worn the teeth,  
Nor any vital organ in repair,—  
The mind a second time in childishness.

Who is not sick or ill-disposed? On whom  
Does not some languor fall? some weariness?  
And is not this the humor of us all—  
Contentious, discontented, petulant,  
Blue, melancholy, miserable, and mad?  
Impatient, some of heat and some of cold,  
Of labor some, and some of idleness;  
The poor distressed and suffering through want,  
The rich made sick by ease and luxury.

Ah me, what tenants these! unwelcome all,  
Find lodgement in this little clod of earth,—  
Fever that boils the brain and shaking chills;  
Tormenting stone, consumption, rheum, and gout  
Scurvy, anæmia, deadly cholera;  
The hideous cancer, pox, paralysis,  
Immedicable leprosy, and plague,  
With piteous delusions of the mind,  
All the wild forces of fanaticism,—  
Dark superstitions, terrors; morbid gloom,  
Insomnia and hypocondria  
And melancholia and delirium:  
With these our foibles, idiosyncrasies,  
Innumerable wants, thirsts, hungerings;

## Conversation Ⅹ

Our beastly and abominable lusts,  
And that unrest which only Death can still.

Nor does wealth, power, genius, fame, confer  
What all men seek—but never find on Earth.  
For even richest ones lack something still  
And greatest fail of what they would attain ;  
As when the wife of England's conqueror,  
Coming to her distressful journey's end,  
Told how all Earthly glory she had seen  
But never with it aught of happiness.  
Hear thou the poet making his complaint :  
*Our life is war ; eternal war with woe.*

In every house there is this tragedy,  
For every eye on Earth this woeful scene,—  
The dismal panorama Time unfolds.  
None need go to the theater to see  
The worst that has befallen man, nor yet  
To romance or account in history  
Of crime, war, servitude, calamity :  
It is what each experiences, it is  
That which inexorably comes between  
Ourselves and what we fix our hopes upon—  
It is what finds and pierces every heart.

Omniscience could not willingly create  
This universe of wrong. And what is man,  
Conscious of all, himself the sufferer,  
That he still plagues the Earth and will not cease  
In his desire to propagate the race ?  
But Love, entreating with soft glance of eyes

## The Colloquy

Sweet smiles and quickly palpitating hearts,  
Makes men and women traitors to their kind  
Who further still this heritage of woe.

### V

To whom shall we appeal ? What power without  
Is there to hear us ? Nature but repeats  
Unceasingly this strife-ful spectacle.  
True, we are sometimes told this is the way  
Up to the higher form and excellence  
Of moral type. But Nature now how old !  
Already infinite the time of growth—  
Time seemingly, if wanting time, wherein  
To perfect everything, and she brings forth  
This warring, self-devouring progeny,—  
This fearfully depraved and sinful life  
And never ceasing pain for all that lives.

As many as would save the world have failed :—  
Their sympathy, their will, their heroism  
Soothe not the pain nor heal the deep disease  
Nor rescue those who wait deliverance.  
Prometheus proudly suffering for men,  
The strong-armed Herakles combating wrong,  
Meek Gautama resolved to end desire,  
Wise Sokrates at winnowing the truth ;  
Confucius, Manu, Moses giving law,  
The mournful Jeremiah in complaint  
And Jesus with his ministry of love,  
Epitomize the efforts of the race—  
Engaging with the ancient evil powers ;



## Conversation १

Nor seen yet the advance to victory,  
But helplessness of man and his despair,  
Beset with his innumerable ills.

Pity they gave and endless sacrifice  
Without avail. Not less our praise is due  
To them: so worthy were the gifts our thanks  
And grateful memories may not repay.  
This was the precious merit Jesus won:—  
Despised and hated and reviled of men,  
Yet loving them and deeply pitying.  
And this the glory of his martyrdom:—  
Abandoned by the God to whom he prayed,  
Not bearing his own suffering alone;  
His heart broke with the woes of other ones,  
Millions on millions in their misery.

Prophets, reformers, heroes, saviors come  
And go their way, and mighty conquerors,  
But still the Earth endures its sin and pain  
And waits one mightier than Herakles,  
To cleanse and cure and to avenge its wrong.

Thyself hast shown the limits of reform,  
The impotence of all philanthropies  
And institutional morality.  
No more than our æsthetics will produce  
Musicians, painters, poets, orators,  
Will moral science or a scheme of faith  
Produce the honest man and holy saint.  
And never will our economics bring  
Plenty to all and ease and happiness.



## The Colloquy

Nor will our sociology combine  
In peaceful, universal fellowship  
These egoistic personalities.

The best of moral precepts now are found  
In lands where men are dead to moral sense,  
To enterprise, to justice, liberty;  
While Ages of the Faith, especially  
Marked by their purism or their fervor, show  
No corresponding ethical advance.  
The kneeling nations, loyal to the Church,—  
Distinguished for their reverence, are as much  
In ill repute for deeds of lawlessness,  
For vice and ignorance and bigotry;  
As vilest loudest to the gods have called,  
Not thinking morally to mend their lives.  
No expiation made and no reform,  
But leaves its residue of unreclaimed;  
The stubborn masses choosing still to keep  
The brutish habit,—robbing, warring still  
And following their selfish ends or lusts.

The progress which we boast, but slowly moves,  
But slowly civilizes and refines,  
While increase in productive power and wealth  
Shows not a tendency to liberate  
The masses from their toil and poverty :—  
Reform, Advancement, and Enlightenment  
Confronting everywhere, in every age,  
Earth's irremediable ills and wrongs.

Nor righteousness nor piety avails,  
Exempting from the miseries of life.

## Conversation Ⅹ

The innocent and those who plead for good,  
To what antagonisms and hate exposed!  
Seizure of person and of property,  
While sharing with the wicked equally,  
The common sorrow of our kind and pain.  
And piety has added yet the pains  
Of deep contrition and unworthiness,—  
Trials of the probationary state  
And the denial of the will to live.  
Not sinners, but the noblest of the Earth,  
Are the most wretched, and in gloom the most.  
What weariness of spirit, what despair,  
What insipidity, disgust, revolt,  
And the temptation to despondency,  
The saint at worshiping, experiences!  
What parched and desert way, and dark and drear,  
Through which his journey lies! What weight he  
bears!  
As Bunyan, the meek pilgrim, writes: *I was  
A burden and a terror to myself.*

## VI

Long my discourse, but thine inquiries still  
Remain: *Whence came we? whereto do we go?  
Why does this world of wrong and pain exist?*  
All was by the unconscious powers wrought  
Without reflection or concept of end,  
And the finality, as seen displayed  
In worlds, in living organisms, events,  
Exists not by, but for intelligence;  
Evolving life in all its varied forms,

## The Colloquy

Instinct and reason, as unconsciously  
As corals build or mollusks form their shells.

We are not other than the elements:—  
There is in matter a continuous  
Ascending transformation, of which life  
Is the result, the intellect of man,  
The highest it attains; with tendency,  
Inherent, constantly to retrograde  
And to return unto itself: thence death.”

I asked, “ But whence the thought of Deity—  
The sense of God which men declare so real  
To them ? And whence the popular belief  
In gods, in dæmons, angels, manes, ghosts ?  
May there not be an extramundane mind,  
And good and evil spirits who respond  
To man’s deep faith,—to which all ages, lands,  
Or superstitious or enlightened, give  
In proof, so great a cloud of witnesses ? ”

He answered, “ Dreams and figments of the brain !  
This is the genesis of all the gods—  
The forces, elements, phenomena,  
Personified, and apotheosis  
Of warriors, chiefs, and early ancestors,  
With apotheosis in later times  
Of majesty and iron despotism  
And passions of mankind etherealized,  
Or given permanent, dæmonic forms;—  
The awful mysteries of Nature some,  
Great heroes some, kings worthy of the name,

## Conversation ३

With sires illustrious and amiable ;  
Adventurers the most and revelers,  
Shameless in villainy and mad excess,—  
Aping the tyrant, epicure, knave, clown.  
The characters attributed to them,  
Intriguing, jealous, vengeful, sensual,  
Alone acquaint us with their origin.  
And only dreams and fancies of the brain,  
Those unsubstantial, ghostly visitants,  
Phantoms residing in the ancient mind,—  
Pale, timid, twilight-wanderers, that come  
From an abode as shadowy and dim.”

I asked, “ But what of the persistency  
Of hope,—the longing to live after death? ”

He answered me: “ A pleasing sentiment.  
But who, of all, would willingly repeat  
His life on Earth ? Should one knock at the graves  
And ask the dead in them, whether they wished  
To come upon the world again and live,  
They all would shake their heads. And all would  
soon  
Weary no less of immortality.”

I said, “ But most have thought there is a land,  
Somewhere beyond the veiled gates of Death,  
Where men have only immortality  
And weary not in ceaseless round of joy.  
And somewhere, seemingly, must be a realm  
Where, under equal rule and equal skies,  
Men may have compensations for the wrongs

## The Colloquy

Imposed,—the bitter servitude endured,  
The prison, exile, heel of despotism,  
Or who in war came to untimely end,  
Or who have suffered here for righteousness.”

Impatient of my view, he thus replied,  
“ So men expect in time to find a pure  
Democracy—commune of equal rights,  
Yet all the while hold their despotic rule;  
Warring, enslaving, robbing, murdering,  
The many evils of the woeful world  
Thus multiplying,—thus continuing  
Chaos’ old reign and pandemonium.

And where the other world to compensate  
The loss, the wrong, the suffering of Earth ?  
The prism reveals to us the elements  
Of farthest worlds; the metals in the Sun,  
In the Pole Star, Sirius, Alcyone :  
All are such stuff as Earth—a curse on it !  
In every world these changeful elements,  
Quaternion of seasons, solar year,  
And alternating of the day and night ;  
All habitable worlds preoccupied,  
Where one who visits is a trespasser  
Or begs a grudging hospitality.  
Not one of all, but bears its teeming life  
And overcrowded populace, as does  
The Earth, where war, storm, famine, pestilence,  
And numerous diseases decimate  
Its multitudes; and death, coming to all,  
Permits new generations to arise,—



## Conversation १

These generations, the sole occupants  
In their own time and place, and having lived,  
Transmit to others, as themselves obtained.

Thyself hast seen how weak, unreasonable,  
Are all our doctrines of a future life ;  
One only, touching probability—  
That of the transmigration of the soul,  
Or its returning sometime to the source  
Whence it has had its life, thus merging in  
Being unceasingly continuous.”

Then I to him : “ But little this consoles,  
Death ending personal identity.  
Or maybe Nature favoring some Boodh,  
Grant him return of consciousness ; or like  
Tiresias, the blind old seer, to whom,  
Alone of all the shades, Persephone  
Granted intelligence and memory.”

He answered, “ Never other faith has found  
Such wide acceptance on the Earth as this :  
The creed of Kapila, Patanjali,  
Of Kalidasa, Krishna, Gautama ;  
Of Zoroaster, wisest of the seers,  
Of Trismegistus who all learning had ;  
Of Dioscorides, Euripides,  
Pythagoras, Plotinus, Porphyry ;  
The mystics Dionysius and Bohme,  
And these read deepest in philosophy,  
Plato, Spinoza, Bruno, Goethe, Kant,—



## The Colloquy

Instructing us, would we but heed the way,  
Escaping thus life's ills.

But still we strive,  
For what, we do not know; the wrong and pain  
Prolonging, helping further to prolong,  
Unwilling yet our bondage here to end,  
And wail and woe of all the living world.

Not that I sorrow always without joy,  
For there is pleasure in unselfish work,—  
Trusting to later generations gifts  
Not yet appreciated in the world.  
In music and in art I find delight;—  
The harmony, expression, purity  
That quite engages me and I forget  
The travail of the Earth, its dissonance,  
Its weariness, its wickedness, its woe,  
Its wrongs, its strifes, its chilling tragedies—  
Life's loath, detestable experiences."

Resting his argument, a while he sat,  
As one in meditation deep. Then said,  
"Once to live on the Earth and happily,  
Or miserably, as is the lot of most,  
Should satisfy, though few resignedly,  
So take the measure even of their ills.  
Myself have sometimes wished that there might be  
A land beyond those darksome boundaries,  
For which to look,—like greatest traveler,  
Who having seen the most, yet more would see;

## Conversation §

As when the youthful Macedonian  
Had won the Earth, then wept that there were not  
Yet other worlds to conquer and explore—  
And sometimes wished the fables had been true,  
Conferring Earthly immortality;  
As once of hollow Lakadæmon told,—  
How Helen there with Menelaos lived,  
In youth perennial and changeless love;  
The past forgiven or forgotten all,  
Nor the Greek chiefs nor Trojan wiles disturbed.

At times, in contemplation deep I touch  
Nearly that happy state where self is lost:  
The will, no longer individual,  
Become idea,—the eternal hence,  
Subject of knowledge, pure; disturbed no more  
By vain desire or strife of elements;  
Seeing what sensuous eyes have never seen,—  
The permanent, essential forms, that lie  
Behind illusory phenomena.

At times, imagination lifts me up,  
As it does thee, and I have visions then  
Of worlds not blighted with our Earthly ills,—  
Worlds, sinless, deathless, peopled by a race  
Who live, as we have thought in our ideals  
Ourselves would live, but never yet attained.

At times, with changeful Nature *en rapport*,  
Wish that I might be taken up again  
In the vast evolutionary round:  
Live, in the alga's cell, unconsciously,

## The Colloquy

And conscious in the higher organisms,  
In intellect of man and in the thought  
Of farthest generations after me;  
In Autumn, with the flowers fall asleep,  
With them revive in the new life of Spring,  
In worlds not yet created, reappear;—  
The hope, that by some chance, the human soul  
Surviving an eternal entity,  
Will be caught up by some new stream of life,  
To be a conscious being, as on Earth.  
But oftener I have the wish, the thought,  
To live in the grand general consciousness;  
As often asking if there may not be  
A grander outcome sometime, in some world  
Or state of being than our consciousness  
With its illusions; sometimes have the thought  
Of love divine or pity there may be,  
The Soul of Nature greater than all powers;  
In all, encircling all, and bearing all  
Into its infinite repose and peace.

Avaunt, ye childish superstitions! dreams!  
Only this narrow choice is left to us:—  
To die as cowards die, or to believe  
Blindly in the impossible, or nerve  
Ourselves with fortitude against the time  
Of death, or helpless with Earth's miseries  
And wrongs, renounce all exercise of will  
And tranquilly behold existence fade  
To nothingness; life and the world itself  
Woeful and pitiable, thus bring to end."

## CONVERSATION XI

THE WORLD OF ILLUSION. BY THE EREMITÉ

### I

WE all are striving, running each his way,  
We know not whither, but that Destiny  
Thus goads us on, thus tortures with unrest;  
Like Ió crazed or one of old possessed.

Our longings are a fathomless abyss  
Which nothing fills: our aims how sure to miss!  
Or reaching, find not worth the coveting;  
Our hopes, so many phantoms taking wing.

Power and place, what baubles to allure!  
Fame, wealth, applause, to whom are they secure?  
Youth, beauty, pleasure, they are of a day—  
One knew when saying, *All is vanity*.

Our life, sad, short,—that all our wishes cheats,  
A promise made, which never payment meets;  
A will, postscript with troublous codicils,  
Given unasked, encumbered with its ills.

## The Colloquy

The gifts of Nature, how unequally  
Conferred on men! Birth is a lottery—  
The few to fortune born, to own, oppress;  
The many born to want and wretchedness.

How many delve that one a prince may live!  
Or die, the conqueror a name to give!  
Croesus, thou hast thy gold; but what the toil  
Of those who gathered it and wrong and spoil!

And the vain, greedy race and covetous,  
Untamable, piratic, murderous,  
Refuses still fraternal love and peace,  
From old despotic bondage full release.

As youths bar out their teachers Christsmas day,  
To have a treat or time for merry play,  
So older ones, in very wantoness,  
Their monitors turn from them and repress.

Its wisest, holiest, the race denies,  
Betrays its Christ, mocks him and crucifies;  
Exiles the patriot, the prophet stones—  
Applauds the fools and fattens idle drones.

Men have tried long to outwit Destiny—  
To circumvent their ills—with what dismay  
And rout! confused like Babel's builders all  
And Chinese, raising their stupendous wall.

## Conversation ⅩⅠ

Some for the care, the grief, the troubled mind,  
In pleasure and carouse the cure would find;  
As luckless, wretched men, and burdened sore,  
In drink would drown their woes and have them  
more.

One thinks that bliss is found in great estate,  
Hence lives and strives but to accumulate:  
Fool! not to know how much one may possess  
And still lack comfort, ease, and happiness.

In vain our gathering of Earthly store,  
With plenty not content, but seeking more;  
With selfish greed through robbery and spoil,  
Taking yet others' goods and heavy toil.

Death comes: what more does proudest monarch  
own,  
With crown, with scepter, on the lofty throne,  
And underneath rich canopy of state,  
Than naked beggar starving at his gate?

With knowledge one would smooth life's brambled  
path;  
But as the heated blade, put in a bath  
Of oil, gains edge to cut, so it is found,  
Wisdom makes sharp the thorns the more to wound.

None has secured to man pure happiness,  
Exemption none from evil, wrong, distress;  
Turned not from poverty the long lament,  
Nor brought with wealth and luxury content.



## The Colloquy

None has fulfilled the end of prophecy,  
None yet has taken the world's sin away;  
Nor fitted yet redemptive scheme or creed  
To man's despair and world of want and need.

And Justice, where secure ? where Equal Right ?  
Where Liberty, against Oppressive Might ?  
What perfect law, state, or society ?  
And where a science of morality ?

And thou, too, lookest Heavenward in vain,  
To height of bliss, thou never canst attain :  
Nowhere is that existing thou wouldst find—  
Immortal world and ease and peace of mind.

The stars are self-consuming as the Sun,  
And planets through their virile cycles run,  
Nor always vital force may have to lend,  
While life, wherever nourished, comes to end.

If we could visit every world in space,  
We should not find in one a deathless race ;  
Should hear on every one the mournful cry,  
Lamenting wrong, loss, pain, calamity.

Nor think to find above, beyond this sphere,  
A voice responding to thy waiting ear :  
The secret thou wouldst know none will reveal—  
There is not any answer to appeal.

## Conversation ㄧII

The gods and dæmons we would bribe or charm,  
Have not the power to help us or to harm.  
This Gautama has taught: *It is in vain,*  
*Asking the gods for food or health or rain.*

Nor sacrifice, nor gold, nor hymn, nor prayer,  
Moves them to soothe your sorrow, ease your care:  
Not one of them, for all your costly gifts,  
Once answers you, your heavy burden lifts.

### II

How restless all are with this worthless lot!  
Alike with what we have and have not got;  
Vexed that so little of ourselves we know,  
And vexed the more, when one our worth would  
show:

All chafing in this mailed environment,  
Mid never ceasing murmur, discontent;  
And desperate, despairing, will not choose  
Enduring good nor cheating sin refuse.

Such is the sad estate of man on Earth,  
Who, without asking or consent, had birth;  
Came crying, naked, helpless from the womb,  
As wretched, helpless, goes down to his tomb.

Our life, how little worth its painful cost!  
In pain begun, in pain at last is lost.  
But dreaming something is, we claim a prize—  
It dazzles and dissolves before our eyes.

## The Colloquy

And what are we but phantoms moving here ?  
Were not—a moment are—then disappear:  
Shapes, as in dreams, go chasing through the mind,  
As moanings sometimes heard in Autumn wind.

A cry, a moan, a piteous distress!  
From the unconscious waked to consciousness,  
And world of woe into existence brought—  
Illusion! Bliss is all-sufficient naught.

Where are the living men of yesterday ?  
As bubbles blown and broken when we play;  
As voices heard, or ocean's deeper roar—  
A cry, an echo on some caverned shore.

### III

Not answered yet! Still hast the wish to live  
Again? Askest the ancient faiths to give  
Their secrets up? Some shade to bring to thee  
Full evidence of immortality?

The life of man is as the light of day,  
Forever past when once it fades away:  
Another day is brought with other morn,—  
Another life, when other child is born.

As one illustrates with a chariot,—  
A mechanism of parts together brought,  
Which, while combined, receive the power applied,  
But broken or disjoined, are cast aside;

## Conversation ⅩⅡ

Fragments and rubbish now to rot and rust :  
So living organisms fall back to dust,  
When smitten and disorganized by Death,  
Nor now combine nor take the vital breath.

And fittest ending of life's misery,  
The stirless sleep. *To be or not to be,*  
Crazed Hamlet, thou wouldst this debate, but know :  
They in their graves rest from the strife and woe.

True, most in other worlds have hoped to gain  
Reward for their good deeds ; for wrong and pain  
Endured the greater joy. Ah, never there  
Will one Earth's sin and suffering repair !

Remember what the ancient poet said :  
*That will not live again which once is dead.*  
But what the miracles men have believed !  
*Christ risen*, with what zeal proclaimed ! believed !

In Syrian lands to-day, where he had birth,  
That prophet's dust with his forefathers' earth  
Is mingled : legends, creed, and Easter song  
Mislead your faith and do his grave a wrong.

## IV

Illusion our beholding, and a dream,  
And not the ultimate or real scheme  
Of the external world and plan of life,  
Are these apparent forms, their movements, strife.

## The Colloquy

Illusion all, that our perception brings,—  
Phantasmagoria and seeming things;  
Specters that pass us by, change with the day,  
We passing them ourselves as shadowy.

And all that to our senses doth appear,  
Ceaseless becoming, and not presence here;  
Since man creates the world subjectively,  
Which, but for his idea, would not be.

Ah, to put off desire! turn from the dream!  
Deny ourselves the things which do but seem!  
So may Illusion's reign be brought to end,  
The full redemption to be sought, attained."

## CONVERSATION XII

### OF THE NATURAL ORDER

ONE, a listener with me  
To this deep philosophy,  
When his script the Eremite  
Closed up, begged me this to write:

“ In the world of want and need,—  
Strife and envy, lust and greed,  
Nothing lacks for tale of woe.  
But the cause, if one could know,  
Must show, too, the benefit  
Of Earth’s pain and end of it.

Is it God who foreordains ?  
Chance, or Fate, that binds in chains ?  
Fiend in Hell who works us ill ?  
Or sin in the human will ?  
Only this is proved to me :  
Nature changes ceaselessly,  
And in every particle,  
Latent lies the principle  
That creates or that destroys—  
Every energy employs—



## The Colloquy

Gives to flame, to frost, to rust,  
Burns to ash and grinds to dust;  
Ruptures and disintegrates,  
And itself insinuates  
Everywhere; to everything  
Brings corrosion, sickening,  
Pestilent and poisoning breath,  
All the agencies of Death:  
Slowly, imperceptibly,  
Wastes and withers; wears away,  
Or it rends with violence  
And strength of Omnipotence:  
Wearies, troubles every life  
With the care, disease, and strife:  
Everywhere is enemy,  
Ruinous calamity.  
See its work in ages past—  
Earth's accumulated waste:  
Rocks and mountains ground to sand,  
Seas encroaching on the land,—  
Drouth and desert making gain,  
On the fruitful vale and plain,  
Tree and soil denuded hills,  
Fountains dry and sparkling rills;  
Man's proud work to ruin brought,—  
Work of hand and grandest thought;  
Greatest cities overthrown,  
As child's cob-house tumbled down.

Bides that yet, which doth defy  
What destroys thus ruthlessly,  
Easily the end is seen,

## Conversation §111

What will be, by what has been—  
Parthenon and Pyramid  
With the silent cities hid ;  
Proudest work that brain can plan,  
Costliest by hand of man,  
In the common ruin laid—  
Earth in waste and nations dead ;  
E'en destroying Death have end,  
Thence no empire to extend.

As one sees in hour at play,  
Acted, life-long tragedy,  
See all human history,  
In this brief epitome :  
As the generations pass,  
A vast, surging, warring mass ;  
Each one reaching forth for best,  
Little mindful of the rest ;  
Falling most, where few have won,  
When the war and race is done.

Ah, delusion of our life !  
Sordid wish and wasting strife !  
As each enters Death's dark door,  
What is less or what is more ?  
First to fall or first to win  
Where in common all pass in ?  
In the seeking, who had gain ?  
In the strife, what foe is slain ?  
Still abides the wrong, the sin,  
Present still, the foe within—  
Still the war and still the strife,

## The Colloquy

For the evil is in life.  
Solon knew this when he said,  
*Count none happy until dead.*

And as vain, attempts we make,  
Else than destined course to take,  
Of plan laid ere Earth begun  
Her swift travel round the Sun.  
Vain the thought to supervise  
What before creation lies,  
In the flux of elements  
Found the brooding of events;  
Out of elemental strife  
Rise and flow of stream of life,  
All man's art, his passions, moods,—  
Fortune's oft vicissitudes.

What our hope then ? what our joy ?  
This: the powers that destroy,  
Build again and populate,  
Cover up the desolate  
With fresh blades and foliage;  
And in sterile, senile age,  
Reproduce the kosmic plan,—  
Heaven and Earth renew and man."

## CONVERSATION XIII

### EXCURSION TO MARS \*\* WORLD BUILDING

#### I

**M**EETING again: my quest pursuing still,  
A poet who knew much of ancient lore  
And versed in science took my problems up,  
Giving imagination wing—discourse,  
Throughout, I ween, more pleasing to the Muse  
Than miseries the Eremite disclosed.

“ Presuming on thy wish to hear,” he said,  
“ Something of visions seen I may unfold—  
Conjectures, dreams, may be realities  
That shall not weary or o’ercloud with gloom.

As Jewish patriarchs thought to relate  
The generations of the Heaven and Earth,  
So one might tell the life of all the worlds,—  
Beginning, youth, maturity, and end;  
Something of life in all where life exists,  
Something of mind on all and its employ.

Observe the rising of the planet Mars:  
It is a world in all much like our own,

## The Colloquy

Making unwearied circle of the Sun ;  
Older apparently and nearer end  
But nourishing a youthful, fruitful life.  
It has its Arctic cold, its Tropic heat,  
Its day and night with seasons of the year,  
While the blue heaven spreads out above it far  
And deep with its innumerable stars.  
It has its fertile lands and desert wastes,  
Its mountain heights above adventurer's tread,  
Its regions still unknown, or land or sea,  
Around the frozen circles of its poles ;  
Till lately had its undiscovered isles,  
The fairest of its lands unvisited.  
Its people, very like ourselves in shape,  
Have too our vices and infirmities ;  
Tempted as we, and fallen under sin.  
And all die sometime, somehow—in their wars,  
Of sickness, accident, and wasting age ;  
One generation after other one  
Laid in their quiet unremembered graves.

They have as we their many industries :  
One tills the land, another sails the seas ;  
One labors at the forge, one, at the loom ;  
One teaches war, and one, the arts of peace.  
Some live alone to help those of their kind,  
And some, most generous to those unborn,  
Plant the slow-growing trees whose fruit they know  
Will never ripen for themselves to eat.

Most varied their pursuits. Their bards attempt  
The highest passions and sublimities

## Conversation §1111

When singing of the gods and war and love;—  
To memory commit the hero's deeds,  
And mournfulest of Martial tragedies,  
Investing worthiest with deathless fame.  
Once women told their lamentable tales  
Of husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers slain,  
Led captive and in hopeless slavery sold;  
And maidens told of lovers far away—  
In war, on sea, in strange lands wandering.  
Their priests read still their ancient oracles  
And effete laws and creeds long since outgrown;  
Still to the superstitious and devout  
Give ear at the confessional and sell  
Them relics, pardons, and indulgencies.  
Saviors have taken on themselves to bear  
The sins and sorrows of the Martial race,  
Urging their penances and ritual  
And abstinence to free from all desire.  
And they have their wise minds who think to solve  
The saddest,—the most troublous mysteries  
And deepest problems of the Universe:  
Lone, lofty minds, a few, misunderstood,  
Because advanced beyond those of their time;  
And some, who out of hardest circumstance,  
Calamity, neglect, misfortune, wrong,  
Brought eloquence, song, hopeful prophecy,—  
The priceless gifts to those in after age;  
Or bred in mournful, melancholy place,  
In haunts of vice and in the very hells,  
Yet spoke for God, the soul, and liberty.  
And they have teachers and philosophers  
Forever in dispute; their theories



## The Colloquy

Diverse, conflicting, contradictory,—  
Doctrines of Trinities, Infinitudes,  
Redemptions, Providences, Covenants,  
Of Fate, Foreordination and Free Will.  
And some defend dogmatically creeds  
Themselves do not believe nor comprehend,  
While bigots put in ban and persecute  
Faiths other than their fathers formulate.  
Metaphysicians they have who deny  
That anything exists; bold Infidels,  
Agnostics, Atheists, born to question faith  
Or to protest against authority,  
With sophists, who judged by their fallacies  
And commonplace, presume that all are fools.  
They have their charlatans and demagogues  
As self-contained as any on the Earth;  
In sorriest decadence of the arts,  
Their mountebanks who would revitalize  
The master-workers of the former times.  
And they have, too, their idle populace,  
Maintained in luxury by others' toil;  
Their men and women in society,  
A silly set, who crave to be admired,—  
Who publish to the farthest ends of Mars  
Their blank inanities and vanities.

One glories in his matchless eloquence,  
Another in his comeliness of form,  
In personal adornment other one.  
In evil only some find their delight,  
To shame and ruin bringing other ones.  
Some to amuse the vulgar multitudes

## Conversation §1111

Their native beauty wantonly display ;  
By histrionic art and tragic pose,  
Or wondrously arrayed, evoke applause.

They have their parties, greedy for the spoils,  
Their partisans in never ending strife,  
Their agitators always seeking cause  
For change and urging radical reforms,—  
Communists, Socialists, and Nihilists  
Who find the remedy for every ill  
In readjustment of Society.

Land-hungry nations rob and spoil the weak,  
Or jealous potentates, ambitious chiefs,  
Engage the populace in war to gain  
Despotic personal supremacy,—  
Napoleons with overmastering wills  
And Cæsars greater for their millions slain ;  
They have had tyrants who corrected wrongs  
And conquests helping Liberty and Right,  
Real advancement and prosperity  
Only with free and honest government.

They have their wars, crimes, murders, miseries,  
Their present wrongs and wrongs of ages past ;  
A record of disheartening memories,  
Of nations whose sole claim to greatness rests  
On what they won from weak in bloody strife,  
And lives of kings of whom they but relate  
Their brutal cruelty and deathful deeds ;  
Traditions of their ancient tribes and clans  
Engaged in piracy and robbery,  
And chiefs and heroes of the earliest time

## The Colloquy

Who with wild beasts and monstrous giants warred,  
Or purged the land from theft and villainy,  
With a long bead-roll worthier of fame,  
Their murdered patriots and martyred saints.  
And they have lands, impoverished, desolate,  
Once populous and great in wealth and power,  
Whose treasures are their ruins, tombs—remains  
And monuments now piteously held:  
Possessions, too, that pleases more to tell,—  
Their progress, freedom, comfort, luxury,  
Laws, learning, arts, and the humanities;—  
Rough-hewn, archaic, kyklopean piles  
Refined to delicate and exquisite,  
A real renaissance, as well, reforms:  
Their world of beauty, love, and happiness,  
Of good and right to set against the wrong.

They have their records of a host of gods  
In twilight like our own, their Golden Age  
And their lost Paradise to which they oft  
Recur in times calamitous; like us  
Their dim traditions of far ancestry  
Who were as gods or had descent from them.  
Moreover they live in expectancy,  
Perennial, of a millennium;  
Or dying, have the hope to live again  
Immortal with the father of their race;  
Like us, their fond illusions cherishing,  
Believing most in the unseen, unknown.”

## Conversation XLIII

### II

I said to him, " This may be true of Mars,  
Bearing to Earth his marked resemblances,  
But hardly can it be supposable  
That on the Earth are found the types of life  
Of all the other worlds inhabited,—  
The planets seen or those supposed to move  
Around the multitudinous fixed stars.  
And what strange beings may be living there!  
Greater and wiser and more beautiful  
Than men—and women, if one may excel  
In any sphere Earth's fairest, loveliest,—  
Eve, Helen, Cleopatra, Beatrice:  
Worlds where the ignorant are wiser than  
Our learned philosophers and scientists,  
As there are doubtless worlds where animals  
Are better learned and mannered than Earth's men:  
Worlds old in æons when the Earth was young,  
Advanced in science, art, discovery;  
Or they had set at rest before Earth was  
The problems which perplex us and annoy—  
Whether it is kind Providence or Fate  
Or elemental forces ruling them;  
Whence they have had their origin and whence  
At death their souls will take their endless way;  
Their ancestry, not in dispute, as here,—  
Some claiming they descended from the gods  
And others that they came from hairy beasts:  
Worlds circling nearer or more distant suns  
With other measures of the day and year;  
To whose inhabitants Nature presents  
A spectacle more wondrous than yet seen

## The Colloquy

By man, or dream or vision has disclosed :  
Worlds moving in the light of double suns  
Of varied coloring, whose atmosphere  
Shades not as that of Earth from light to dark  
But saffron-tinted as the East at morn,  
Or roseate or as auroral streams :  
Worlds where red foliage predominates  
And stars look down on them from firmaments  
Of crimson depths : worlds of such vast expanse  
That their inhabitants may never think  
To circumnavigate or find what lies  
At their antipodes, so wide the sea  
And so immeasurably great the land,—  
Infinite oceans which no one may cross  
And continents so wide none can explore ;  
Or mountains rise to such prodigious heights,  
Himala, Andes, Alps, compare with those  
In altitude as ant-hills with themselves :  
Worlds where the days are as a month of Earth  
With months and years of corresponding length,  
Whose people, reckoned by our solar time,  
Live, as the fables tell, the patriarchs  
Lived in the earliest age—through centuries  
And think them robbed of life when Death appears :  
Worlds where the year is of Earth's seasons' length,  
Whose people quickly take to pleasure's ways  
Like butterflies to wing—as quickly die.”

### III

My flight at end, the Poet, answering, said,  
“ In telling of the wonders of the heavens,



## Conversation    ❧❧❧❧

Far short imagination and our dreams  
Will ever fall from the reality.  
Observe the stars in the vast tract of heaven;  
Or shown the strife of gaseous vortices,  
Or curdling mass of meteoric dust,  
Holding as its potentialities  
Its suns, its planets and their satellites,  
As well their precious latent energies,  
Inherency of life, and consciousness:—  
One, a faint mist or haze of nebula,  
Formless and far diffused through outer space,  
Another one, condensed, a brighter mass,  
Its atmosphere, the measure of a plane  
Marking the orbit of its future worlds:  
Another one, illumining the heaven,—  
Pure flame, the brightest now of all the stars.  
Or other see, a planetary world,  
In incandescence and self-luminous,  
Waiting its trillion years to calm and cool,—  
To still its strifeless elements and fit  
Its habitable parts for dawn of life.  
See other world whose isles and continents  
Are yet so many lava floating shells,  
Its seas impended in its atmosphere:  
And one, a world rich in its organisms,—  
Fertile, luxuriant, and beautiful,  
But passing now through vast climatic change;  
Its orbit from the nearly-circular  
Through some disturbances by other spheres  
To the elliptic shape prolonged, its line  
Of equinoxes perpendicular  
Now with the longer axis of its path,



## The Colloquy

Causing those oscillations of its climes,—  
Its Southern Hemisphere in genial warmth,  
In Northern one, the circumpolar cold  
Advancing far throughout its Temperate zone;  
Its depths of firn, encroaching on its life—  
Entombing all; its streams of ice and drift  
Abrading its most ancient continents,  
Or slope or plain, and ploughing deep its vales;  
And borne still o'er the glaciated wastes  
The vapors from the heated Tropic seas,  
Deep mantling clouds and dark that fall in snow.  
Observe another one, with Tropic clime  
Extending to its Polar latitudes,—  
A world whose living never upright stood,  
But fish-like swim or creep forth serpent-like,  
Or saurian-like wing-handed rise in flight,—  
Creatures in panoply of scale and shell,  
Horrid and hideous of monstrous birth;  
Its vegetation, coarse and flowerless  
The most,—moss, lichen, fern, and calamite.  
Yet wondrous is the promise of this world  
And hope within its crawling, loathsome life:  
One creature prophesies:—it sometime will  
Rise up in scale of being and to sense  
And knowledge of itself through quickened nerves  
And growing brain. What now doth gorge itself  
By times, then torpid lies a senseless mass,  
Waits yet experience, higher mental growth  
Which man, himself, who walks the Earth erect  
Still waits, and ages and eternities  
Still watch and wait.

## Conversation §1111

Another world is dead  
In its maturity, a cinder mass;  
Its surface furrowed, scarred with gaping rents,  
Craters and yawning chasms—enormous depths!  
Cold, waste, and desolate and destitute  
Of all that breathes; its countless forms of life  
Forever in its barren rocks entombed:  
And over all its deathsome surface lie  
Thick strewn its vestiges of handiwork,  
Of architecture, sculpture, pottery,—  
Tiles, columns, friezes, statues, vases, urns;  
Cut gems and cameos; coins, jewelry,  
With instruments and implements of war,  
The chase, of husbandry and useful arts,—  
Yet beautiful in its calamity  
And stillness of its endless solitudes,  
Shining so softly with its borrowed light.  
Still other world,—smitten so long of Death,  
Its rocks are crumbling, falling into space  
In clouds of dust and trailing meteors.

### IV

But pitiable this meager history  
When found related to unnumbered spheres  
And evolutions of eternities!  
How vast the Universe! how wondrous far  
Our vision spreads in this immensity!  
Nearing no boundary in height or depth,  
No diminution of the multitude  
Of worlds forever onward traveling.  
How few of us have counted all the stars

## The Colloquy

Which to the naked eye are visible!  
Yet millions more, the telescope reveals  
And millions yet beyond the camera,  
Five hundred million systems, may be more;—  
Star clusters so immensely numerous,  
Thick sown as in  $\odot$  Centauri,  
In 47 Toucani, or massed  
Throughout the measureless galactic belt,  
Such the perspective of infinity:  
This of the calculably seen and known,  
Not of infinitudes that lie beyond.  
In miniature, what worlds the microscope  
Reveals to us, till late invisible  
And undiscoverable, or chemistry  
Enables us to weigh and demonstrate!  
What wonders in the Universe unseen  
By us, relating to phenomena!—  
The varied energies, or weight or heat,  
Repulsion, permanent polarity;  
With these the subtle ether, filling space,  
Elastic, permeable, and volatile,  
Yet firm as adamant, transmitting light  
And warmth and energy from suns to worlds,  
And tremors that involve the farthest stars.

### V

And who has measure or comparison  
Of what the people of those worlds achieve?  
For poet has not sung nor scribe has told  
In full the exploits of a single race,  
Our own, and one world's art and industry.

## Conversation XIII

If, as the Eremite would have us know,  
Men have been martyrs to their enterprise,  
To luxury and to magnificence,  
There is the compensation visible  
In vast domains secured, in mighty works,  
In plenty found, and comfort,—happiness.

What conquests man has gained o'er elements  
Inhospitable and intractable!  
Lifting their adamantine barriers up  
Defiantly and spreading wide the floods,  
Or snows or desert sands or wilderness.  
And what the structures that his hands have  
raised!—

Egypt's eternal pyramids and tombs,  
Her marvelous colossi, obelisks,  
Hypostyle halls and courts and avenues;  
Lifting the mighty colonnades at Thebes,  
At Memphis,—Philæ's sculptured propylons,  
Baalbec's enormous bases, columns, roofs,—  
Corinthian capitals, entablature:  
Reared Anurajahpoora's dagobas,  
Cuzco's huge portals, stairways, cornices,  
And Babylon's stupendous walls and towers,  
Her hanging gardens, temples, palaces,  
The glory and the wonder of the world,  
And walls and palaces of Nineveh.  
Built edifices, palaces, baths, tombs  
In Ake, Mitla, Uxmal, and Palenque,  
In Mayapan, Papentla, Cholua,  
In Tulu and Teotihuacan.  
Built beautiful Palmyra, Carthage, Tyre;

## The Colloquy

Athen's proud Parthenon and citadel;  
Rome's amphitheaters, basilicas,  
Triumphal arches, forum, Pantheon.  
Laid at Persepolis those floors of stone,  
Or palace-platform named,—the enterprise  
Of ancient Achæmenian dynasty,  
Supporting once its royal audience-halls,  
Its sculptured stairways, pillared porticos,—  
Its ruined columns, now, and images.  
At Suza, Median Ecbatana,  
At Ctesephon, Seleucia, and Maydayn  
Made royal courts, baths, ornamental grounds,—  
The boast and the delight of Persian kings.  
The famed Alhambra in Grenada built,—  
By what art since surpassed in gorgeousness ?  
Mosques, mausoleums, porches, courts, divans  
Of indescribable magnificence  
At Lucknow, Delhi, Agra, Futtehpore :  
The incomparable Jumma Musjeed reared  
And Khuttub Minar, palace of Belem,  
The Bruges belfry, dumb Escorial,  
Seville's Giraldo, Pisa's leaning tower,  
And Florence' and Cremona's campaniles;  
The noble Capitol at Washington.  
And lofty and imposing monolith.  
The Porcelain Tower built, the Chinese Wall  
And massive Kremlin. Built, since to neglect,  
The forest covered temples, palaces  
In Yutacan, Cambodia, and Ceylon,  
And Minæan cities and inscribéd walls  
In scarce accessible Arabian wastes;  
The silent cities of Mashonaland,



## Conversation XIII

And lines of masonry beneath the snows  
Of Arctic Greenland and Siberia,—  
Majestic ruins, in their solitude,  
Telling their populous and mighty past.  
At Petra cut out of the living rock  
Tombs, dwellings, temples, stairways, avenues.  
Hollowed the cavern temples of the Nile  
At Elephanta off from Malabar  
And temples on the Coromandel coast;  
The mausoleums of Persepolis  
And hollow rock-vaults of the Husein Kuh.  
And what the meaning of the last as hewn  
Together in the figure of a cross?  
Raised kyklopean walls, mounds, terraces,  
The rude Druidic cromlechs and stonehenge,  
And awful altars raised for sacrifice,  
Common to paganism throughout the world,—  
At Pergamon the most magnificent.  
Built temples at Eleusis, Ephesus,  
Dodona, Delphi, and Olympia,  
At sacred Karnak, Heliopolis,  
At Niko, Kamakura, Kioto,  
Jerusalem the holy and Benares;  
Pagodas at Madura and Tanjore,  
At Trichonopoli, Savoy, Rangoon.  
Built monasteries in the Russian towns  
In sacred Lassa, on the further slopes  
Of Himala and on the Tartar steppes;  
Mosques in Damascus, Shiraz, Cordova,  
Constantinople, Cairo, Mecca, Kum;  
Churches with golden covered spires and domes  
In Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan;



## The Colloquy

Churches in modern Rome, and convents, shrines,—  
Glorious St. Peter's and the Vatican;  
England's cathedrals, abbeys, stately halls,—  
Vast Westminster and London Bridge and Tower  
Paris' Tuilleries, salons, and boulevards.  
In purest Gothic architecture built—  
Cathedrals in the provinces of France,  
And Germany's old Gothic minsters, seats,  
And castles of her feudal royalty.  
Built in the East those fortress-factories,  
And trading posts and stations of defense  
On either of the coasts of Africa,  
The power once and wealth of Portugal,  
And caravanseries in the Levant.  
Or those impregnable defenses reared,—  
The fortresses, Gibraltar, Cronstadt, George;  
Or Holland's dikes—defenses of the land  
Against the sea or the safe harbor made,—  
The piers of Sidon, Venice, Amsterdam.  
The Roman highways built and aqueducts,  
Peru's acequias, frowning terraces,  
And India's vast irrigating works.  
Wide firth and mightiest of rivers spanned  
With cantilever or suspension bridge,  
And under cities, under river beds,  
And through the mountain's base, the tunnel bored.  
With these our endless kinds of mechanism,  
Enormous furnaces and power plants,  
Huge factories, commercial palaces;  
Fleets, transports, wharves, warehouses, granaries,  
Far-reaching railway lines and telegraph.  
In ornamental architecture raised

## Conversation XIII

The slender obelisk and minaret,  
The castle turret and cathedral spire ;  
And placed the fluted columns, long arcades  
And monumental sculptures, bas-reliefs,  
And airy arches, lace-work arabesques ;  
Or fretted ceilings, stucco-fligree  
Veil-like in its transparency, or as  
The gold and azure of the firmament.

Aye, if all of the worlds in space repeat  
These industries or vastly them exceed,  
We may not even think to comprehend  
These aggregations of constructiveness  
Throughout the Universe. But wondrous more  
Is the provision of the elements,  
In that, together with the embryos  
Of life, they held in latency the type  
Of all this handiwork : in atom once,  
In nebula and gaseous, fiery star,  
The steaming seas and frozen continents.  
Or in their ceaseless motion, endless strife,  
Give energy to suns or bring to birth  
And feed all living things, or they bring forth  
This varied veiling of appearances,  
Whether illusion or reality,  
That is the glory of the Heaven and Earth."

## CONVERSATION XIV

FURTHER INQUIRIES \*\* RESTATEMENTS IN  
TELEOLOGY.

THE Poet having finished his discourse  
All in the Chapel spoke in praise of it,  
None more delighted with it than myself,  
Yet wished that in his observations made,  
Pertaining to the Universe, he had  
Unriddled somewhat of its mystery,  
Omission which led me to ask again  
About the underlying cause of things.

Reviewing briefly his survey, I asked,  
“ Is this as the unknowing forces wrought ?  
Or by the flux of elements brought forth,  
By molecules in blind passivity,  
By the World-Will, unconscious, undivine,  
By aimless chaos in vast aggregate,  
Dissolving, forming—thoughtless, recordless,  
Till man, born of the earth, came to have speech,  
The wonders of the Kosmos to declare ?  
But chance, what of its possibilities ?  
How may a power not intelligent,  
Sustain so wondrously or recreate ?

## Conversation XLV

How measure forces, distances, and time,  
For the revolving of the milliard spheres  
In order of eternal harmony ?—  
On ether-oceans cushioning the worlds,  
Making the Earth seem motionless to us  
When spinning on its axis like a top,  
When on its annual journey round the Sun,  
When with the Solar System onward borne  
With swiftness of the thunderbolt's descent ?  
Or it keeps full the fires of all the suns  
Or on the molten spheres, as Earth once was,  
Lays firm and deep the adamantine crusts  
And spreads the waters forth. Or lifted up  
Earth's continents and made depths for the sea ?  
In later time, ground up the ledge and reef  
To sand and silt, or burned the ancient rocks  
To ash and cast them forth, till soft and deep  
The mellow soil, and warm and nourishing,  
Lay over the wide world, or hill or vale ;  
So nearly balancing accretive means  
With the erosive that the continents  
Rise not in every part to frozen heights,  
Nor waste before the waves ? Or now lifts up  
The clouds to heaven,—permitting their return  
In mist and vernal shower and later rain,  
And yet the mighty waters which descend  
In Amazon, or Orinoco's floods ?  
Or caused such full provision to be made  
To store the waters up ?—In mountain wilds,  
Secured those ample reservoirs,—lakes, springs  
Perennial, whence flow the rills and streams ?—  
Tumultuous energies that ceaselessly

## The Colloquy

Nourish the Earth and feed the Ocean's life,—  
That at man's bidding, grind and spin and delve  
And carry forth the commerce of the world!  
Acting unconsciously, or purposeless,  
Inclined the Earth to the Ecliptic plane,  
Making so great area habitable  
And varying the seasons of the year ?

How came the elements to be endowed  
With all those wondrous latent properties ?  
Did they unconsciously evolve the laws  
That govern them ? Unconsciously adjust  
The atom's surface to affinities,—  
Complexities so numerous ? Or weigh  
The definite proportions which combine  
In compounds, or, as simple substances,  
Anticipate the synthesis of forms  
Of Matter and of living organisms ?  
Unconsciously devise those measurements,  
Proportionate, exact in everything ?  
Or ever the proportions which exist  
Between the planetary distances  
And distance of the leaves, distributed  
On the ascending axis of the plant ?  
Or the numerical simplicity  
Of leaves in spiral turns around the stem ?  
Or set so intricately, orderly,  
The echinus' spines and polyp's tentacles ?  
Do they give the vibrations of the air  
A rhythmic harmony and melody ?  
Prismatic colors, to the rays of light ?  
To substances, to heat, to energy,



## Conversation XLV

The readiest convertibility ?  
Do they provide the laws of gravity,  
Determining the orbits of the worlds ?  
Their weight and pressure of their atmospheres ?  
Provide the chemic properties, that bind  
The molecules into coherent forms ;  
Of hardness, toughness, as the diamond,  
The adamantine spar and steel and bronze ?  
Provide as well repulsions, opposites  
To rend, disintegrate, corrode, consume ?—  
Liquid or gaseous diffusiveness  
And instability of nitrogen ?  
Or give to man, to Nature, binding law,—  
To each permitting freedom unrestrained ?

And have the primal energies, by chance  
Or accident, evolved the precious stones ?  
The topaz, amethyst, and sapphire's hue,  
Or yellow, purple, or cerulean ?  
The inward flame and green of emeralds ?  
The diamond's pure dazzling rays of light ?  
The ruby's deep, rich-red, and white of pearls ?  
Or filled, with riches inexhaustible,  
The mine, the quarry, and alluvial plain ?  
Or laid up in the Earth those priceless stores  
Of rocks, gems, crystals, metals, ambers, oils,  
And reservoirs of gas ? In Greenland laid  
The plentiful preserve of cryolite ?  
In Chili, nitrate beds ? In our own land,  
The phosphates, kaoline, lime, salt, and marl ?  
Laid crystals in the cavities of rocks  
And filled the fissures of the rocks with gold ?



## The Colloquy

In Ophir, scattered the auriferous soils ?  
Among the forest mountains of Sajan,  
In the Witwatersrand, South Africa,  
In Californian rift and river bed,  
In drift of Ballarat and Bendigo,  
In frozen gravel of the Yukon vales ;  
The precious adamantiferous clays  
Deposited at Kimberley, and sands,  
Sparkling with gems in India and Brazil ?  
Or mindless, purposeless, did they evolve  
From coarser kinds the finer, nobler type ?  
From spongy and unseemly stalk and club,  
Fern-like, or leafless, flowerless, bring forth  
The highly differentiated trees,—  
Wide leaved and blossoming and bearing fruit,  
Yielding their grateful shade and useful wood ?  
From the wild grass evolve the golden wheat,  
Wide cultivated maize and sugar cane ?  
From crab or thorn, the apple and the pear ?  
From rank and bitter weeds and poisonous,  
The vegetable's tender leaves and roots,  
Pot-herb and salad and the heating spice ?  
Or gave the cluster of the vine its juice ;  
Pulp to the cherry, plum, and luscious peach,  
The cooling lemon, orange, fig, and date ?  
Sweet to the melon ? acid to the lime ?  
To berries sourness mingled with the sweet,  
And color that adorns the apple's rind ?  
Or in the growing trees deposited  
The balsams, resins, starch, elastic gum,  
In plants, medicinal and fragrant oils ?  
In flowers, sweet perfumes and the pliant wax ;

## Conversation #110

Deep in their cups, the nectar-like conserve,  
The fertilizing insects to allure ?  
Unconsciously and purposeless adapt  
So wondrously and to such varied use,  
Bud, leaf, stalk, trunk, bark, fibre, petal, husk,  
Sap, grain, and fruit ? As wondrously enrobe  
The world with foliage to please the eye ?

Not that I would ignore, or slightly  
Pass by the teaching of the physicist,  
That our sensations cheat us all the while  
With phantom worlds and images of things,  
And that no color is, nor density,  
Nor ever any form ; these qualities,  
As we experience them, but the effects  
Of varied movements of the molecules ;  
That the external world, objectively,  
Is not the organized completeness seen,  
But that it is as we imagine it ;  
Or we create its order, harmony.  
Though little it is easier to account  
For what appears than for reality.

Long I have asked, nor had the answer yet :  
What was the antecedent cause of all ?  
What was before this wondrous web of laws  
Holding the equipoise of energies ?  
How did the first unfolding effort find  
The line of least resistance ? So begin  
The series of creative processes ?  
How came the simpler substances to pass  
To multiform ? the incoherent, change

## The Colloquy

To the coherent ? the indefinite  
Change to the definite ? Or the world-stuff  
Existent first, chaotic, far-diffused,  
Whence came the tendency to aggregate,  
Forming the denser mass and luminous,—  
Spiral or heliacal nebula,  
Or gaseous spheres, or habitable worlds ?  
And whence came the first germs of life ? And  
whence,  
Their latent reproductive energies :—  
Their tendencies to differentiate,  
Developing from unicellular  
To multicellular,—from single types,  
Interminable multitude of forms  
That swim, or creep, or fly, or leap, or walk,  
Or house themselves in shell,—and with these, man,  
Glorious o'er all and proudly dominant ?  
And as relates to living organisms  
How came the primal elements to make  
Provision so exhaustless, permanent ?—  
That for all time unvaryingly maintains  
The ratio of the sexes, or supplies  
So constantly, minutely, evenly,  
Carbon dioxid as all life has need ?—  
Or the provision still more marvelous  
For the remarkable fecundity  
Which always follows after war and plague ?

And by what chance did these originate  
The latencies, potentialities,  
Prophetic, formative of higher type,  
In evolution of the macrocosm,—

## Conversation XLV

In microcosms as individualized ?  
Did force transmute itself to solid forms,  
The inorganic organize and live,  
And the unknowing bring forth intellect ?  
And did the lowermost the highest make ?  
Did function will within the simple form  
The complex to evolve ? or, organless  
And without senses, did itself provide  
With viscera and limbs, with nerves and brain ?  
Or creature, stomachless, hungry for food,  
Itself a stomach made ? or one that groped  
In darkness and would see, produced the eye ?  
Or boneless worm, it would rise up and walk  
And so created for itself a spine ?  
Or to find readier escape from foes  
Would rise in air and so developed wings ?  
Or it would stand erect and walk as man,  
So grew a heel and poised thereon its frame ?  
Or it would reason and enlarged its brain ?  
Or it would speak and vocal organs made  
To utter the conceptions of its mind ?  
Or it would gain in progress on its time,  
Thence stored experience for itself and heirs ?  
Or moral being willed and hence denied  
Desire, greed, lust, wild vengeance, brutalism ?

And have the sensuous energies alone,  
Worked upwardly to the divine ? Did these  
Through the wild brutal passions lay the plan  
To saintly piety and purity ?  
Alone, made hunger, lust, the strife and wrong,  
The way of spiritual development ?

## The Colloquy

Or the provision made, that savage tribes  
At war one with another, should evolve  
A higher manhood ? Out of brutishness  
Bring virtue, kindness, love, sympathy ?  
Out of despotic rule and servitude,  
Evolve the peoples' rights and liberties ? ''

## CONVERSATION XV

### THE UPWARD WAY

#### I

I ENDED my inquiries, far prolonged,  
So fruitful proved the theme—to answer them  
A number present in the Chapel rose  
But yielding soon the privilege to one,  
A savant, peer of all the physicists.

“ If thou hast care to hear,” he first observed,  
“ Some further revelation I may make  
Of Earth as she evolved and of her life,  
Continuing, if I may so presume,  
My friend, the Poet’s marvelous discourse.

No longer is it needful to defend,  
As once, the claims of science or refute  
The estimates of the chronologists,  
For man, ere our chronologies began,  
Was then such old inhabitant of Earth  
He filled it with his ruins and his tombs.  
Grave rises over grave, and under all  
Lie our first ancestors and first of kin.



## The Colloquy

No! not in consecrated ground as now,  
Or burial marked with pious epitaph,  
Were these entrusted unto memory,  
And not at Tiryns nor Mycenæ found,  
In Troad, Sais' plain, nor Ghizeh's tombs:  
In mound, in midden, drift, bog, lake, and cave,  
Is written our forefathers' history.

Nor is there need for lengthy argument  
To prove as mythical the narratives  
And earliest traditions of mankind,  
Through ages sacred deemed, in which are told  
How the good gods in the beginning made  
The worlds and seeds of all the living things,  
In their own likenesses creating men,—  
And how the wicked gods and jealous brought  
The evil in the world and sin and death.  
For life came not, as in the fables told  
And Jewish and Chaldean Genesis,  
By sudden advent or through miracle.  
And death is not the consequence of sin,  
Nor is it fate or of Infernal born,  
Furious, implacable, and treacherous;  
Nor is it universal in the world,  
As thought, nor an essential attribute  
Of matter, as the opposite of life,  
Nor a necessity, primarily,  
But being secondarily acquired  
In adaptation to the various ends  
Of life's competitive development  
And means thereto. As one has lately said,  
*Death is the price paid for complexity:*

## Conversation ⅩⅦ

For nothing died of the first organisms,  
The individuals, plants, or animals,  
Being so many reproductive cells,  
Continuously rejuvenized themselves,  
While the more complex, multicellular,  
Burdened with functions, organs numerous,  
And complicated systems, wearied, aged,—  
A prey thence to decay, disease, and death,  
And only in their offspring living on.

### II

As thou in asking didst anticipate  
This is the order of the Upward Way :  
In variations found, in want, in love,  
By natural selection brought about ;  
The complex following the simple form,  
Or function when it has a need creates  
And localizes organs for its use,  
Or differentiation has improved  
Upon the lower, simpler organisms ;  
As men, successful in affairs, rebuild  
Their growing traffic to accommodate.  
And what advancement from the poverty  
Of the most ancient life, the intellect  
And capability of man presents !  
And wonderful the record of ascent  
From lowest up, as Earth has kept account,  
Inerrable and inerasable !  
Thyself hast read this, in the rock and drift :  
That which preceded what is uppermost  
Was dwelt on by the apes and not by man,

## The Colloquy

In lower surfaces dwelt lower forms,  
Less complex kind and less intelligent.  
And nothing of Earth's later, higher life,  
But had its origin in simpler kind.  
The birds, that soar aloft in azure heights,  
Perfect in wing and perfectly adorned,  
Descended from the low, reptilian forms;  
Their reptile parents, from amphibia  
Which had the fishes for their ancestors.  
Fish-like, amphibian-like, ourselves once were:  
The functions of our bodies, that appear  
In periods of Lunar time, retain  
Traces of our primordial life on shores  
Washed by the tides. Moreover, man repeats  
In embryo and ante-natal growth,  
The evolution of all animals."

I, interrupting him, observed, " This told,  
I know not how I have become myself  
And not another personality :—  
Why I am man, raised from these lower kinds;  
Why these, not men, are with the lower still  
Nor making now perceptible advance."

Persisting in his argument, he said,  
" We bear the history of our descent,  
Fixed ineradicably. Parts, which still  
Are perfect in the animals, in us  
Survive in dwarfed and shrunken rudiments,—  
Discarded as from them we make advance.  
These bodies, now erect, and once believed  
To have been specially created thus,

## Conversation XV

Share with all life a common lineage  
And common method of development.  
This is our lineage, if we would know:  
Found in the alga or amœba's cell,  
In boneless worm, lancelet and ganoid-fish;  
Dipnoi, amphibian, reptile-vertebrate,  
Marsupial-mammal, lemur, man-like ape,—  
Deriving thus in an unbroken line.  
Our life from very first and lowest forms.

When in humility our fathers taught,  
That we are kindred of the worm, they reached,  
Unwittingly, the truths which scientists  
Out of profoundest research have proclaimed.  
See what the elements had prophesied,  
And what the lowest of all organisms!  
The crystals striving upward into life,  
Assuming mossy arborescent shapes,  
Or budding, growing in increasing groups;  
The plant with embryonic qualities  
Of animals endowed—with tendency  
To consciousness, to personality.  
And in the lower animals begun,  
Development of those high faculties  
Esteemed the crowning glory of mankind—  
Ideally man present from the first.

And wondrous the adaptions in descent!  
One pattern serving for such varied use:  
All living things, in their development,  
Beginning with the embryonic cell,—  
The plant, expansion of initial bud,—

## The Colloquy

The organs of the plant, the leaf transformed ;  
Digestive jelly-mass and sensitive  
Or membranous digestive tube the source  
Of all the organs of the animal ;  
And found in the first vertebra the cast  
Of every bone, articulating spine  
Or limb thereto, or widening a dome  
The growth of cranial cavity and wall,  
And in the course of evolution seen ;  
The fishes' fins developing in wings  
Of birds, in jointed fore-limbs and the paws  
Of animals, in human arms and hands ;  
Their scales in down and feathers of the bird,  
The reptile's horny plates and hair of beasts ;  
Or structures modified to suit the land,  
The sea, the air, vicissitudes of clime ;  
Each kind new organs adding as they need  
Or casting off such as encumber them ;  
Acquiring colors which attract their kind  
And such as render them conspicuous ;  
Or shading, coloring, in mimicry,  
In what best serves to shield them or conceal ;—  
The latent type, scarcely perceptible,  
Developing to take supremacy  
As in the evolution of the spine,  
With it, the convolutions of the brain ;  
A pigmentary spot found on the worm  
Unfolding for the windows of the mind,  
Or fissure on its skin developing  
The chain of auditory ossicles  
And labyrinths with comely outward ear ;  
Or crimped, blunt, laryngeal membranes brought



## Conversation ƒv

To a free median edge and tuned to song  
And varied utterance ; or speech evolved  
From pairing-calls and cries of animals,—  
The modulations of the orator,  
The earnestness of the tragedian,  
A mimicry of these rude dialects,  
Affecting the emotions, gesturing  
And pose once natural ; the chattering  
Of scolding apes becoming humanized  
By slow transitions into forms and words  
And sentences that served Demosthenes,  
Avitus, Milton, Shakespeare, Molière.

From first the fittest lived or herb or beast.  
And how exact the order of descent !  
Since every species had its origin  
Always coincident in time and place  
With pre-existent near-related forms.—”

“ But man rose up,” I said, “ the serpent creeps  
His way.”

And he, continuing, replied,  
“ Arrested, fixed in its development,  
Or retrograding from a nobler form.  
The reptiles are a dying family  
Which once held the dominion of the Earth.  
No less, man, peerless in his intellect,  
Has through these living gradients risen up  
In common struggle for existence here.

We may not easily repudiate  
Our lineage, such ample evidence



## The Colloquy

Of evolution and heredity,  
These bodies, built by others than ourselves,  
As were the institutions which we boast,—  
The crumbling skeletons of animals,  
Long since extinct, the stairway we have climbed.

Hast made a study of the orang-utan,  
And hast compared it with ourselves ? Or seen  
The fierce gorilla's hands ? the teeth of apes ?  
The gibbon's face ? or seen the mimicry  
As these collectively affect our kind ?  
Wouldst say that these are not our relatives ?  
Nor may we put away resemblances  
We bear to a remoter kin,—the lives  
Of countless creatures that reflect ourselves  
In part, or we owe them some quality.  
Whatever lives is in relationship  
With all—united in the plan of growth  
And to one universal law conformed.  
And mutual the relation found between  
The vital forces and the physical ;  
In essence one the many elements,  
By varied aggregations all evolved."

I said, repeating what before I urged,  
" The tribes of creeping things and animals  
Find soon their limit of ascent while man  
Has reason, conscience, sense of the divine ;  
Progresses, conquers, plans, originates,  
And with the changes of the universe  
His unchanged body keeps in harmony."

## Conversation XV

Ready in argument, he answered me :  
“ Do not too lightly estimate the sense  
And capabilities of the brute world,  
Too much exalt the intellect of man  
In untamed savagery and barbarism,  
Or even very highest we attain,  
So common when we make comparison  
Between ourselves and other living things :  
For animals possess intelligence  
Of no mean order and have qualities  
Moral and social—genius, some of them,  
Approaching if not equal to mankind ;  
Many possessing powers that exceed  
All human venture and sagacity :  
In every species variations found  
As countless as the multitudes of it,  
Marked individual physiognomy  
And amplitude of personality,  
Distinguishing the more intelligent.  
They have affection, love, and gratitude,  
The altruistic spirit—heroism,  
Renunciation, and self-sacrifice,—  
Vindictiveness, ambition, vanity,  
Sense of the humorous, ridiculous,—  
*Their virtues*, as the poet Cowper sung,  
Their morals and the sense of shame and guilt,  
The feeling of remorse and bitter grief ;  
Nor lacking, as psychologists have claimed,  
Time-sense and sense of continuity.  
With what presentiments at times possessed !  
Anticipating earthquakes, storms and floods,  
The drouth of Summer and the Winter’s cold ;

## The Colloquy

Sharing our dreams, our superstitions, fears  
Of the inexplicable; cowardly  
Where man is coward—trembles, stands in awe.  
The birds leave cities smit by pestilence,  
Free-roaming herds, the tainted pasture-lands;  
*The very rats*, so William Shakespeare tells,  
I vouch not for the truth, *instinctively*  
*Quitting a rotten carcass of a ship.*  
Skilled doctors too, some of the animals  
In finding herbs to heal them of disease  
Or fasting, bathing, when in pain or sick.  
They reason, count, observe, geometrize,—  
Practice their cunning arts and readily  
Adapt themselves to change of circumstance;  
As we, build, weave, and sow, secure their food  
And exercise their various industries.  
What strategists are the carnivora!  
What signalists the hunted birds and beasts!  
So certain to communicate alarm.  
What organizers some, economists!  
Assembling on occasion to consult  
About migrations and the common weal,  
Or interests of grave concern to them.  
They have their laws regarding property,  
Respecting right, their code of punishment;  
The rooks and crows, in most deliberate  
And solemnest tribunals, sentencing  
Offending members of their tribes to death.  
And found in families and social groups,  
Extend to one another mutual aid,  
Most kinds uniting to defend their own.  
The elephant will not forget a wrong

## Conversation ⅩⅤ

And keeps in memory a friendly act.  
How kindly thoughtful, this unweildy beast,  
Not to put foot where it will injure one !  
The monkey cares for orphans of its kind,  
The pelican for aged and helpless ones  
And certain rodents for their blind and maimed.  
Oft the wild mother nourishes the young  
Of other kind—feeds, fondles, and defends.  
The orang-utan, when it has lost its mate,  
Sorrows as we when of loved ones bereft ;  
Like us, has dread of death, and of its scene,  
And truly human-like this creature dies.  
Long story, it would be, to tell in full  
The wisdom of the dog and faithfulness.  
Where has man shown the patient industry  
Seen in the insect world ? and where his work,  
Of greater cunning than the beaver's dam ?  
What human architect, when building, cares  
More for the sumptuous and beautiful  
Than weaver-birds when working at their nests ?  
And few among us that more safely build,  
For comfort more, than the tarantula.  
And wondrous is the skill the insects show !  
Without our clever arts and use of tools  
The termite builds its labyrinthine house,  
The wasp, its ample paper-nursery,  
The bee, its geometric comb of wax ;  
And silk worms wind their delicate cocoons,  
And spiders hang their webs like snow-white sails.  
Yet greater tasks than those of Herakles,  
Samson or Finland's wizards, size compared,  
The burying-beetle easily performs.

## The Colloquy

And what economy is shown by ants!  
That vast confederacy, commonwealth  
Of rulers, teachers, workers, warriors:—  
Insects that farm and mine, divide their land,  
Or build their towns with well paved avenues,  
Their roads and bridges, strongholds for defense,  
Their nurseries for pets, their hospitals  
For maimed and weak, their vaults to store their  
food;

Or they engage in games of play, or new  
Acquaintance make, or widely to their kind  
Communicate the news; explore new lands,  
To cultivate, and set the bounds of it;  
Enslave their species and domesticate  
The lower insects; spoil, avenge, subdue,  
And dominate in their superior might  
As the great nations of mankind have done.  
How very like our own, their funerals!  
Careful, as we, of caste and social rank,  
Laying together their own dead at rest  
And slaves and strangers in the potter's field.

The insects quite surpass us in some arts,  
Such their attainments, by what methods taught,  
For many of their tribes are better housed  
Than are the various families of men,—  
None of them hoveled like our peasantry,  
A shame on our vile huts and tenements,  
Our loathsome dwellings, airless, comfortless,  
And mean in architectural design.

What wondrous cultivators, too, the birds



## Conversation XV

And insect tribes! While man is limited  
By wilderness and rock and altitude  
And only sows in the alluvial vale,  
On even upland and the gentle slopes,  
These plant on every soil, in every zone;  
In arctic dunes or wastes as pitiless  
Of Labrador and Asian table-lands,  
The seed of fruit and grain, or clothe the Earth  
With their interminable fields of flowers:  
Thick sown the meadows with the buttercup,  
Daisy and dandelion, rue and phlox;  
Bleak moorlands with the purple heather sown;  
The violets sown and the campanula,  
In mountain wilds, the gentian's azure beds,  
And the sweet pennyroyal in the woods;  
Planted the fragrant thyme in Grecian vales,  
Through Europe northward over hill and plain,  
As far as England's promontories found;  
On Alpine heights, touching eternal snow,  
And Pyrenean, sowed the edelweiss;  
The crimson rhododendron, mid the snows  
Of Himala; in many a Northern lake,  
In wide expanse of the Brazilian streams  
And Nile their gorgeous water-lilies set,  
Or nurtured or cross-fertilized the trees  
That make South Africa a land of bloom.

A pity Haeckel thought it that the bees  
Are not much nearer relatives of ours.  
But Nature has not lavished all her gifts  
On lordly man alone; intelligence,  
Expression finds in various lines of growth,



## The Colloquy

One leading upward the mammalia,  
And one, the insects in development.

And many are the lessons man might learn  
Of virtue, cleanliness, and industry,  
Many, of conjugal fidelity  
From these, his humble friends, the animals.  
And how on onward, upward way, mankind  
Have on this vast constituency leaned !  
The kindly helpful beasts whose milk and flesh  
Have fed, whose fleeces, furs, and skins have clothed,  
Whose patient labor has maintained and borne ;  
Or worm or sloth or higher ape have held  
The thread of life we now are spinning on.

St. Francis of Asissi, when he spoke  
Of animals or least of living things,  
*My brothers and my sisters*, always said.  
And often as he prayed, begged God to bless  
These children of his praise and handiwork,—  
Would that each had this care for all that lives.”

I said to him, “ Thou dost commend to me  
The sweetest sympathy and saintliness,  
Yet wouldst convince me that the Upward Way  
Is an interminable deathful strife.”

Returning to his argument, he said,  
“ On every spot of land, in sea, in air,  
There is continual war : the many kinds  
Struggling for their existence, every one  
Seeking advantage or supremacy :

## Conversation ⅩⅤ

The weak succumbing while the stronger live,  
Or wiser or the morally advanced.  
Unyielding is the principle, the law  
Of Nature that condemns the weak and less  
Adapted to extinction and exalts  
And reproduces what is worthiest.  
Such mother Nature is, putting her own  
Under the hardest discipline; not moved  
By pain or grief, by cry to pitying,  
But thrusts her weaklings and her dwarfs aside;  
Makes sensuality, intoxicants,  
Habits, diseases, never ceasing war,  
Her ready agents to eliminate  
Or bring her rueful populace to end.

### III

How tortuous the course of man's advance!  
Impeded, interrupted oftentimes.  
How long a resident in groves! in caves!  
How long in nakedness and without tools,  
The use of fire and economic arts!  
Or living in those far-primeval times  
In wandering hordes like the gregarious brutes;  
Nor language had nor sense of decency  
Nor any social tie that might refine.  
How long in savagery! in barbarism!  
How long the slave of superstitious fear  
And burden of imputed guilt and doom!  
Striving the while, or losing, conquering,  
No less advancing on the Upward Way  
Till Nature's awful empire has been won.

## The Colloquy

This was the view the Roman poet had  
Of man's first state: a dumb and filthy herd  
That had crept from the Earth when newly formed;  
Fought with their nails, their teeth, their fists for  
    mates,  
For fruit, for acorns, for their hiding place;  
Used cudgels next, and finally made arms,  
The while inventing names for things and words  
With which they could communicate their thoughts;  
The wiser ones then fortifying towns,  
Enacting laws and saving stores of wealth.  
Not much conjecture nor our science adds,  
So plain the Upward Way through want and war.

How great an influence on man the chase  
And war have exercised! The search for food,  
The sport, or self-defense, or conquest planned,  
Spurring the sluggish masses, quickening  
And sharpening the listless intellect.  
What educator war! From very first  
Impacting men and disciplining them;  
Merging nomadic families and tribes,  
Whence states and nationalities arose,  
And law and order were maintained; e'en now,  
The school where ignorance is forced to yield,  
And Despotism and Old Conservatism  
Give way to Progress, Right, and Liberty.

Not that I fail to see or purposely  
Ignore what else than prodding want and war  
Has urged man up to his supremacy:  
What art has done, love of the beautiful,

## Conversation 𐆆V

And what religion, morals, customs, laws,  
And institutions of society.

What record of advance religion shows !  
From naïve impressionism, totemism,  
From divination, soothsay, sorcery,  
From bloody sacrifices, penances,  
Obscene and horrible idolatries,—  
To kindly charity and love of man.”

Here interrupting him I said, “ And seen  
With the advance of man in intellect  
Quite other notions of the Deity:  
The selfish, warring, tribal gods disowned,  
With the infernal and malignant powers,  
And One benign and cosmopolitan  
Declared the Ruler of the Universe.”

Then he, continuing the theme, exclaimed,  
“ Blest Reason, Science, Art, Philosophy,  
That gained for us this great deliverance!  
The banishment of the capricious gods,  
And hellish broods that terrorized the Earth—  
Bel, Molock, Yahveh, Amun, Indra, Zeus,  
And that old dragon, Satan named by us  
And Mephistopheles; the Furies, Fates,  
The Hell-dog Cerberus with three fold jaw;  
Haggish Silenos and goat-footed Pan,  
And Bakchos, though still seen his tipsy crew;  
Gnomes, Gorgons, Harpies, Ate, Lamia,  
With spirits of the mountains, vales, and fens,  
Of forest wilds that stalked the murky night.

## The Colloquy

Blest vision! clear, since now no firmament  
Divides the Heavens and the Earth and we behold  
The milliard worlds, throughout Infinity,  
Moving obedient to Eternal Law.

Advance as great as by religion shown  
Is seen in ethics and in government,  
Still greater the advance of industry  
As we compare the scanty resources  
Of men in savagery and barbarism  
With what enlightened people have in use.

And only seen begun what is to be  
In past achievements and in conquests won,  
For many must be the discoveries  
And the inventions that await our skill,—  
Our farther industry and enterprise;  
And remedy we may have and reform  
For every evil in society.  
What favored few have hitherto attained  
All shall possess or even yet surpass:  
Nor need we much presume:—in every land  
There is awakening, enlightening;  
In evolution of society,  
Perceptible advance and permanent.  
What promise in the wider intercourse  
Of nations! in exchange of merchandise!  
Facilities for travel,—sending news!  
Our implements and our commodities  
Are most efficient missionaries found  
Teaching, as no religion yet has taught,  
Fraternity and peace throughout the Earth.



## Conversation XV

Soon men will have a common alphabet,  
A common language—own a common faith,  
And common laws and plan of government;  
And such will be their means of traveling,  
On land—on sea—through air, that they will pass  
Through space with the rapidity of birds  
On migratory wing from zone to zone;  
And their economy improving still,  
Supply their fuel less laboriously  
From Earth's interior store; or, from the Sun,  
Pouring abundant rays, obtain their light,  
Their heat and force to use as they have need.  
With other resources, meet other wants  
And every new demand:—the soils enriched  
By chemicals,—drained, irrigated, stirred  
To greater depths; by new appliance warmed,  
So far increasing their productive power  
That want and famine will be driven out.  
Already the realities transcend  
The Psalmist's visions and the Hebrew seer's  
And all the visions of Apocalypse.  
Could Archimedes, Hero, Ptolemy,  
Or Egypt's engineers and architects,  
Awake to see our vast machinery,  
Our steam, electric, and etheric powers;  
Our factories, our arms, our armaments;  
Our ships, cars, automobile carriages,  
Networks of telegraphs and telephones,  
What must be their surprise! And how surprised  
The thaumaturgist and the leech of old,  
Or learned Galen and Hippokrates,  
Could they know of our medicines and skill



## The Colloquy

In surgery,—our anesthetics, lymphs,  
Preventive viruses and germicides,  
The X-rays' marvelous illumining,—  
Our handy instruments! Yet we, ourselves,  
With others now on Earth, may live to see  
Gain of invention and discovery  
As far improved on ours as ours excels  
The ancient wonders and conveniences;  
For, with mechanical appliances,  
A single century has gained for us  
More than all time had hitherto bestowed."

Here interrupting him, I said, " But this  
Presumes on moral and on social gain  
Beyond what man at best has yet attained,—  
Subordination yet of despotisms  
Various in kind and powers militant;  
Adjustment yet of labor, capital,  
And interstate affairs; yet self-control  
Of every individual, till now,  
By few attempted, fewer realized."

Taking the argument again he said,  
" True, as the Eremite observed, we still  
Pay tribute to the old despotic powers.  
No less the multitude have promise now  
Not by the former generations known,  
For few are found that will contentedly  
Endure the wrong as did their ancestors.  
The poorest and most ignorant have learned,  
That there is somewhat better to be gained  
And earnestly set out to win the prize,

## Conversation XV

While in the past, not distantly remote,  
Few rose above the station of their birth  
Or chose what they would do or be, but bore  
Their slavery and drudging poverty  
As sent of God, unconscious, all of them,  
Of what is meant by Right and Liberty.  
Few ancient jurists thought to advocate  
The natural and equal rights of all,  
And general was the want of sympathy  
Even among the kindest for those  
Not of their nation, tribe, or family.  
The nobleness of our great ancestors  
And easy circumstance was for the few,  
The upper and the ruling class, who held  
The masses under them in servitude.  
Though lauded the democracies of old,  
None well deserved the name, so little free,—  
In one, a selfish aristocracy,  
In other, oligarchic despotism.  
Permit me to re-write what Hegel said  
Of Liberty:—the Orientals knew  
That one was free, the despot ruling them;  
The Greeks and Romans knew a few were free,  
Themselves, served by their retinue of slaves;  
The modern world has free majorities,  
The coming man will know that all are free.”

“ And God be praised,” I said, “ when this is  
seen.”

He answered, “ It will be when men have learned,  
That necessarily the interest

## The Colloquy

Of any person is the interest  
Of all,—the wrong and robbery of one,  
The wrong and loss of every citizen,  
And that to rob or to impoverish  
The people of a foreign land, we bring  
Their poor and helpless soon to our own doors.  
It will be, when the nations of the Earth  
Have learned to yield their childish sentiments  
Of reverence to titles, pageantry,  
And welcome honest business government,  
Nor longer settle their disputes with arms  
But gain through arbitration right and peace;—  
When once the habits of the race are changed  
From military to industrial;  
When laws, that need be general, are made  
By representatives from all the Earth,—  
As Greeks joined in Amphictyonic league,  
In Iroquois Confederacy seen;  
When Transportation finds a better code  
Than pirates gave or brigands taught the use;  
When Capital and Labor shall unite  
In an industrial copartnership;  
When those who labor are not less esteemed  
Than the employer and the overseer;  
When every individual has the right  
To hold his property or sell at will,  
The right to buy or sell as suits him best  
In any market of the world; when one  
Is free to travel as his pleasure leads  
Or business, unmolested by the claims  
Of revenue and jealous sovereignty;  
As free to speak, to reason, and believe;

## Conversation XV

When all who live on Earth shall have its use,  
Each one, as heir, his rightful share of it."

I said, " But war continues and the wrong,  
And seen industrial society  
At strife throughout the whole enlightened world;  
And found the law of evolution quite  
As flexible as are our Christian creeds,—  
A code of enmity for time of war,  
A code of amity for time of peace.  
Moreover thou wouldst prove that war had been  
The greatest educator of mankind."

Here one, taught by the English sage, observed.  
" Man is the consummation on the Earth  
For which the elemental forces strove  
Through an eternity, for which himself  
Has striven through uncounted years, till last,  
Putting beneath him all that came before  
In evolutionary rivalry,  
Himself subduing, perfecting in mind,  
In the moralities, the strife shall cease."

Then he, who had the argument resumed:  
" The prophecy the atom held fulfilled."

" A glorious prophecy," I said, " and may  
Fulfillment of the dream be near. Sad, though,  
The thought that when humanity attains  
Its best, and Earth is truly pleasurable,—  
When all inventions have been perfected,  
The loftiest ideals of progress gained,

## The Colloquy

Death will be present like the skeleton  
At Egypt's feasts to mar the joy of it."

He answered: " Having tasted every joy,  
One should not chide at death, nor think to rob  
The coming generations of their time."

I said, " There is small chance that altruism  
Will take away the dread of death from men.  
With increase of the pleasurable in life,  
Men will hate death the more. The happy state  
Ourselves have thought to realize on Earth,  
Replete with every joy, would bring to us  
Such sorrow in the thought of leaving it  
As never yet affliction laid on us.

And sad the thought, that when the world itself  
Attains the height of its development,  
It will thereafter hasten in decline!  
Or, nourishing through æons still its life,  
Nourish for war, disease, and accident.  
If glaciation, as the Poet told,  
Has often hitherto alternately  
Covered its Temperate zones, it may again  
Depopulate the Northern latitudes  
Or Southern, and destroy the proudest works  
Our hands may rear; or cataclysms again  
Sink the unstable continents beneath  
The sea, and from the deep raise other land,  
It may be other life, another race.  
And dreadful, inexpressibly, the thought  
Of coming time, however yet remote,



## Conversation १७

When the whole race, like some poor savage tribe,  
Will flee from waste to waste, from want to want,  
A dying remnant in a dying world."

Then he, taking the theme again replied,  
" Far distant yet is the Earth's cyclic end  
Or the decline of its productive power.  
And men live in the race as it lives on,  
One generation in another's life,  
The mighty dead, too, living in their deeds.  
Ay, this is immortality,—lived well,  
Lived ill,—'t is written as ourselves have done,—  
Record, eternal, ineffaceable.  
Men die: worth, virtue, wisdom live. Our acts,  
Our principles survive the doom of worlds.  
Live not the venerable dead with us,  
Teaching and ruling as their wont? Where is  
The end of the dominion of the mind  
Of Kapila? of Plato? and of him  
Who gave the law to Israel? Of him  
Whose geometric forms, or lines, or points,  
Measure in every science, art, and trade?  
Of those whose good example is the law,  
The life and hope of all the human race?"

Then I to him: " Thus have the Comptists taught  
And Jews of old, the memory no less  
Of former generations fading out  
As years increase. What but oblivion  
Is end of personality?"

Then he,  
Resuming, " So untimely fade the deeds



## The Colloquy

Of men as they are held in memory  
By their posterity or overlaid  
And lost in legends; not so Nature keeps  
The record and will keep for evermore.

Nothing is lost, and nothing really dies;  
Nothing has been but has left of itself  
Somewhere an inerascable account.  
Each atom registers whatever is  
And holds the history of all that was  
And embryo of all that is to be.  
Could we but question one of these or note  
Its combinations, changes, accidents,  
We might, as on a printed page, read all  
Of past occurrences,—as well predict  
What yet shall be in all futurity;  
Of every force, the registry exact,  
The motion and the weight of every star,  
The height of every wave raised on the sea,  
Rapidity of every wave of light  
And tremors of the air producing sound;  
Recording every cry and spoken word  
And never uttered thoughts and sighs suppressed,  
With every deed that men would keep concealed.”

I said, “ A deathsome record like the tomb;  
Reminding us that when we come to die,  
Not our own consciousness of what we did  
Or were shall keep the Universe informed,  
But our poor dust, or happily, some deed  
Or incident become linked in the chain  
Of causes and effects. It is not much,

## Conversation XV

A saurian's bones or skull that Hamlet found  
So cheaply valued when we are no more.  
And quickly comes this end to all of us,  
Or finished or unfinished is our work  
Or any part of the provision made  
For those left to our care."

He answered me,  
" We know not at what moment Death will come,  
But most have time to work, the time to learn,  
The time for doing good. Myself will strive,  
As he, my fellow-worker and true friend,  
To make my little corner of the world  
Somewhat less miserable than when I came,—  
So live that Death may not be troublesome."

I said, " If, to this end each one would strive,  
We soon should see an Earthly Paradise."

He answered: " An ideal I pursue,—  
Not that the perfect I approach, nor boast  
In pride of fancied good or worthiness!  
I would but reach what others have attained,  
I would be just and meek and merciful.  
What gain for me to be like one of these!—  
Like ancient Job, who ne'er the widow wronged,  
Nor fatherless; like that good governor,  
In old Nicopolis, who never took  
A child from mother's breast nor the poor man  
From his wife's side; like him who took the care  
To say to all, before he came to die,  
That if he had judged one unrighteously,

## The Colloquy

Or one oppressed, or owed to one a debt,  
He ready stood to make them full amend."

Moved deeply by his high resolve, I said,  
" Almost thou dost persuade me to content  
Myself in going out my little round,  
To toil as is my lot or help in need,  
Nor mind what Fate or Chance or Providence  
Brings forth of evil or of good. Yet there  
Is that—I know not what, or if it is—  
To which I would appeal; idolator  
I may be, blindly shaping me a god,  
Or think I lose me in a godless waste."

Then he to me: " It is no easy thing,  
To put all superstition under us,  
Distrusting where we see—in the unseen,  
In the unknown, bestowing confidence.

There is no waste where all of space is full.  
No lacking of prevision, force, and law  
Where every atom holds the energy  
Latent that may evolve a universe,  
The consciousness and the morality  
Sufficient for developing the life  
Of any world,—imparting intellect  
And moral sentiment to higher forms,—  
All capabilities in learning, art,  
Forms of society, and government."

I asked, " Do wisdom, justice, truth, and right  
Inhere in substances ? in energies ?  
Or naming Nature as creating all,

## Conversation XV

Providing all and judging in the Earth,  
Wouldst thou invest her with the attributes,  
By long consent, ascribed to Deity;  
His omnipresence and omnipotence,  
Or providence as seen in history ?”

He answered: “ Nature comprehends the whole,  
Is the World-orderer, World-governor.  
Not that this covers up all argument  
Or fathoms the unknown. We feebly see  
The universal plan in such small part  
As now our vision grasps. Nor may a name,  
Though reverently spoken, furnish us  
With the solution of these mysteries  
That but recede as we investigate.”

I said, “ And yet to that Inscrutable,  
Unknowable, Philosophy has turned  
To find the cause of all.”

Then he to me:

“ The cause of all is immanent in all,  
Whate’er the cause may be—to us unknown,—  
As in dynamics proven: everything  
That has existence—atom, world, all space,  
Abounds with its own vital energies;  
Or every atom has its sentient side,  
Or Nature as a whole is seen endowed  
With spontaneity, susceptible  
Of use, each part in force or form or life,  
Or found as readily transmutable;  
The Universe, as Haeckel has declared,

## The Colloquy

A unit in its cause and mechanism,  
Self-ordered, self-evolved, and self-sustained;  
Substance and mind a single principle,  
And found phenomenal the difference  
Between a mental fact and physical.  
And seen the human conscience, built up out  
Of slowly organized experiences  
Of pleasure or of pain, nor needing once  
Other than natural guidance in the course  
Of the development hereto attained."

" Losing," I said, " the personality,  
Intelligence, and Fatherhood of God."

" And losing it in sorrow," he replied:  
" To see the Sun shine from the silent heaven,  
And Moon and stars, down on a soulless world!  
And I have felt with utter loneliness  
The absence of the Great Companion dead.  
Yet terrible, as is the thought of it,  
For without God the Natural Universe  
Has lost to me its soul of loveliness,  
No less the great command to man I keep—  
To work as best I can while it is day,  
*For the night cometh when no man can work.*"

## CONVERSATION XVI

### OF REMINISCENCE

#### I

THE Savant ending his discourse, the Seer  
A second time took my inquiries up.  
Remembering his promise, first he said,  
“Thou searchest ever and dost not despair,  
And light will come to thee at last and peace.  
But long will be thy strife, and wearisome  
Thy watch, ere thou shalt overcome and gain  
The full enlightenment. Then will the world  
Of sense be brought to end; thyself become  
Pure, passionless; desire forever still,  
All sin subdued.

And know, thou wast before  
The world had form, coeval with its life:—  
Given to nurture of the elements;  
Humbled with creeping things in mire and dust,  
With birds nesting on boughs, with beasts in caves;  
The earth imprisoning thy soul the while  
Fashioned by animal progenitors  
And upright raised for thee,—for man; and now,  
To sense inclined or wisely making choice,  
Determinest as never star or Fate,  
Or ever any god, thy destiny.



## The Colloquy

### II

This of the Universe I would relate :  
It is not more—it never will be less ;  
Life does not add to it—death naught substracts,  
Its forms of matter and its energies  
Being forever redistributed.  
Nothing is made—change brings what is about ;  
What lives, has lived before—will live again.  
Repeatedly Earth's life has been reborn,  
The former generations living now,—  
Our farthest ancestry yet in the world  
And sharing daily our companionship.  
Thus unto all is portioned equally,  
Time, happiness, wealth, honor, fame, and power.  
To none the Universe shows favoritism :  
No one it wrongs or slights ; to each it gives  
Sometime, somewhere, all opportunities.  
One is a king enthroned—one is a slave ;  
The slave will be a king, the king, a slave ;  
The lewd, the leprous wretches sometime take  
Virtue's fair garb and mead of happiness ;  
The galley convict, helpless of reprieve  
And miserable unspeakably to death,  
Sometime have liberty and reverence ;  
The proud, deceitful, selfish one the while  
Sinking his life to very brutishness,  
Whereto he will be born in other world.  
No soul but passes through the painful round  
Of all experiences to perfect it :—  
Each one reborn on Earth, until desire  
Is last subdued, then never after seeks  
The realm of sense and is not born again.

## Conversation XVII

Such soul the sensual never more will tempt,  
Nor pleasure turn aside, nor vanity,  
Nor death again have power over it.

And rational throughout the moral plan  
And universal,—partial to no one  
Mercy or grace, or judgment, chastisement;  
Never propitiation made for some  
That others are denied of,—have not known;  
Atoning sacrifice not made by one  
Alone and once for all, but made by all  
Sometime, somehow, in service to the race;  
Bearing the sorrow all, experiencing  
The pain; and tempted all, all sharing sin,  
All overcoming—perfected at last,  
Joined all in the same immortality.

### III

To the Materialist these mysteries  
Remain: how life first from the lifeless came,  
And life to consciousness, and consciousness  
To moral sense. Nor has it yet been shown  
What keeps our personal identity  
Amid the change and flight of molecules.  
*Existence*, one has said, *is not composed*  
*For two consecutive moments of time*  
*Of the same particles*, yet all the while  
The life continues on, and memory  
Treasures its vast, accumulated stores;—  
Including what diameters of vision!  
What fantasies! what thoughts! experiences!  
Event upon event, though not as one

## The Colloquy

Presumes, in common with photography:  
Not as a palimpsest its entries took,  
Not as the speeding atoms impress take,—  
As quickly give to others with increase,  
And not as Carus teaches,—set in forms,  
But recollection found a faculty  
Of an eternally persistent mind.  
Hidden, how long these stores at times, as when  
The aged recall what happened them in youth!  
Hidden at times how wondrously through years,  
As when disease obscures or injury  
Closes the portals of the intellect;  
Then shown with health's repair as at the first!  
In accident how inconceivably  
Quick to appear! when all that has occurred  
To one in life, or all that he has done,  
Passes in instantaneous review!

Nor may our moral freedom be explained  
By a material philosophy,  
Nor those inquiries which discovery  
And deepest learning never satisfy;  
Which set at rest by theory or creed  
A little while, still other riddles find,—  
*Abysmal deeps of personality*,—  
Of self, of others' souls, not fathomed yet,  
Of sentient Nature, never yet explored;  
Or having limits found, these limits break  
Till further boundaries are set and moved,—  
Horizons that recede and still recede,  
And beckon on to the infinitudes,  
Unrealized, and far eternities.

## Conversation XVI

Even the animal intelligence,  
So highly lauded in a late discourse,  
How little understood! the wondrous sense  
Of sight, of smell, with those expressions seen,  
Of deepest spiritual significance  
And moods incomprehensible to us.  
As much as man, the dog has shown his fear  
Of the unusual, and his intercourse  
With forms of being by ourselves unseen.  
Sees phantoms, it is thought, may it not be  
Thin astral forms as sometimes seen by man?  
Or disembodied spirits of the dead?  
And what occultism, supernaturalism,  
Leads the guanacos to their dying place?  
Where, from the social herds on open plains,  
Barren plateaus, and from the mountain sides  
Of Patagonia, the aged ones,  
And sick and wounded ones, descend alone,  
To the thorn thickets on the Santa Cruz  
And Gallegos, nor once miscalculate  
The time, nor miss the way, though hitherto  
Untrod save by those never to return;—  
Dragging their feeble bodies, creeping far  
Under the bush, to deepest solitudes,  
There singly suffering the pangs of death;  
Continuing this awful pilgrimage  
From the immeasurable past till now.  
And why begun? By what far ancestor?  
And how, untaught, so sacredly observed,  
Since to those banks none are accompanied?  
A thousand generations lying there  
In those funereal vales, in sepulture

## The Colloquy

Communal as our own, and solemn more,  
And mournful, than are human tragedies.

And yet remain these problems of descent :  
The varied types of men and faculties,  
With those exceptionable qualities  
Attributed to genius. Human life,  
From very first, has been a series  
Of strange surprises, little calculable  
By any law, so variable the way,  
Either of retrogression or advance,  
As not by subtlest of philosophers  
Discerned. Has one done well or ill, the cause  
Is sought in circumstance of birth, of clime,  
Of age,—of kind or hard environment.  
Yet those with circumstance, apparently  
Most favorable, and opportunity,  
End with a brief and ignoble career.  
The titled houses, wealthy, honorable,  
Send forth their idle, sensual prodigals,  
And culture the most generous and wise  
Misses, how oft! the moral faculties;  
While men of humble origin, through some  
Impulse or gift, we know not how acquired,  
Rise up to be the leaders of the race,—  
Teachers and benefactors of our kind.  
Out of the saddest and most hopeless depths  
Of social misery and poverty  
Came one, the loveliest I ever knew,—  
Most charitable, sweet, and pure in life.  
Heredity, as said the Eremite,  
Does not account for genius or its lack,



## Conversation XVI

Nor for the birth of those remarkable  
In history,—for Moses, Gautama,  
Jesus, Mohammed, Luther, Shakespeare, Burns,  
Heyne, Cervantes, Lincoln, Joan of Arc,  
Or other name secure in memory;—  
Foundlings or like the oftenest the men  
Of genius, as was ancient Salem's king,  
Fatherless, motherless, without descent.  
Is it not that the wisest bring with them,  
The vast experiences of former lives ?  
And favored ones, who in the race of life  
Fail signally, is it not that they bear  
The weight of tendency bequeathed to them  
By former acts ?—themselves expressing now  
The ends to which they lived and gave their  
thoughts ?

Not only once, as the Apostle saith,  
Is it appointed unto men to die.  
Already often we have tasted death :  
Our life here on the Earth is only one  
Of a long series of lives, in which  
Incarnated, our souls have lived. Most time  
Men look to the immortal life beyond,  
Not to the immortal life they left behind ;  
Think of the death, which dying, leads to Heaven,  
Not of the death they died to live on Earth,  
Yet from the memory of former lives,  
Is born our hope of living after death.

*How came I into this world ?* asked a child,  
Surprised in its new home. As one in sleep



## The Colloquy

Borne to another house, wakes up to ask  
How he came there, so from the sleep of death  
The child awoke, to ask how it had come  
From once familiar scenes, to this strange world;  
Or others, having lived on Earth before,  
Find in the things familiar their surprise.

### IV

Myself recall the people I have met  
Long years ago, the streets and dwelling place  
I knew in some old city of the East,  
In ruin now. And often I recall  
Adventure and employ in some strange land,  
Unlike these eyes have seen, but no less real.  
These fragmentary reminiscences  
Of struggling consciousness, I have at times  
Tried to collect in a chronology,  
Fitting my present life thereto, or more  
Or less distinctly. On a tongue of land  
That jutted outward from the Arctic Pole  
Then with a Tropic verdure clad, I lived—  
Born to those fair of skin, that afterward  
Migrated Southward till the Persian Gulf  
And Indus set their bounds; impeded oft,  
And long delayed by war with savage tribes,  
Or slowly struggled with the glacial clime  
Involving then the Northern Hemisphere,  
But in their struggles gained; all conquering  
And now as nations dominant, our own  
And kindred languages still uttering  
The words I lisped. I know not but the sleep

## Conversation XVI

Of death, came over me. On Elam's plains  
I was a shepherd, walking with my flocks;  
At night, looked upward to the milliard orbs  
Circling their ceaseless round or seeming fixed;  
Observing, as they changed or disappeared,  
Or when returned with the revolving year;  
With tireless eyes, then searching outermost,  
Depth beyond depth; discovering the moons  
Of Jupiter; the fleecy nebulae  
Resolving into stars; and thought to count  
The cycles of lunation for the round  
Of eighteen solar years, whereby I learned  
To calculate with certainty the time  
Of the eclipses of the Sun and Moon,  
Or past, or yet to come. Again I died,  
Nor e'er returned to my nomadic life,  
Or those clear skies. Reborn,—to Akkad now,  
And dwelling on the fertile strip of land,  
The Tigris and Euphrates bound; before  
Elam had come as conqueror, or yet  
In Ur the Hebrew patriarch was born.  
The hours I numbered then that fill the day,—  
The days that make a week, a month, a year;  
Twelve months, the year, and thirty days, the  
month,  
With added days to fill the calendar;  
And seven days the week; the seventh day,  
Sabbath I named, or sacred day of rest.  
Moreover I arranged and mapped anew  
The constellations of the Zodiac;  
For then the Vernal equinox occurred  
When Aries was rising with the sun.

## The Colloquy

Again I died. Reborn in Chaldea,  
I was a priest to Bel in Babylon,  
Wearing the sacred robe and clad the more  
In mystery. My watch at night recalled  
To memory, none was more learned among  
Astronomers, none held as I was then  
In reverence and awe by the great king,  
And that vast city's busy populace.  
No empty fame: for I made measurements  
Of the apparent motions of the stars  
And computations of their distances.  
O had that mighty people rightly prized  
And kept the knowledge I bequeathed to them!  
For boldly I urged these hypotheses,  
By countless observations since confirmed:—  
The meteoric origin of all  
The worlds and incandescence of the suns  
Which shine in space,—that stars, which seem to us  
But points of light distributed through heaven,  
Are globes of inconceivable extent:—  
That all the worlds, now habitable, once  
Were nebulous, or gaseous, diffuse,  
As flame since cooled, compressed, solidified,  
And fitted to accommodate their life;—  
That all of space, to us immensity  
Illimitable, is the fold of stars,  
As numberless as locusts in the swarm—  
Suns, planets, systems, constellations, which  
By mutual attraction are upheld,  
Or keep their orbits changless with the years,—  
Infinity of solar systems like  
Our own and penetrated, every one,

## Conversation XVIII

With life and consciousness and memory.  
But superstitious all and slow to learn,  
They worshiped the bright stars as gods, feared  
them

As dæmons, or they thought by them to read  
Fortune and destiny. Astrology  
Supplanted the new science, deadening  
And monstrous conjuries and sorceries;—  
Forgotten all my great discoveries,  
Until long centuries had passed. Reborn  
In Greece, with new access of light, in Rome,  
In India where I made known the fact  
Of the rotation of the Earth,—not that  
Myself recalled each time I reappeared  
The knowledge I had previously attained,  
But sometimes gave with lessened memory,  
With increase, though, the oftener. Reborn  
Long after in a Moorish town and held  
A Saracenic caliph's patronage;—  
Then at Senaar I made the measurement  
Of a degree of latitude, therefrom  
To calculate the Earth's circumference,  
Nor much its distance missed. Reborn again  
In Italy, and helped with later art  
And mightiest inventions to achieve,  
I published, with the laws the stars obey,  
A plan of the celestial mechanism.  
'T was there a hellish hierarchy rose  
To persecute and to repress the truth,  
Chaining those who would give to men the light  
In dungeons dark, or burned them at the stake,  
Or tortured horribly till death relieved.

## The Colloquy

But one recanted,—wise enough to save  
His life to Science, wretched though in thought  
Of cowardly escape from martyrdom,  
For it was bitterness that death has not.  
My latest coming thou full well dost know,  
And knowest what I yet anticipate  
Gaining and giving on my endless round.”

## CONVERSATION XVII

### OF PROVIDENCE

#### I

**I**N presence of the reverend men and wise  
Assembled at the Chapel in retreat,  
A specialist of some philosophy,  
Some science or profession every one,  
I should have bowed in silence, listening,  
But since the problems and the discontent  
Of all the ages burdened me, I asked  
Of those I met that answer might be given  
If answerable: so, when the august Seer  
And affable had ended his discourse,  
Others I importuned, if happily,  
They might have light myself had not attained,—  
For those deep themes profounder argument.  
Responding to my urgent call one rose,  
A teacher, patient, tolerant of view,  
Of cheerful mood, most hopeful of the world,  
Who found in all a purpose manifest  
And great reality of Providence,  
In moral discipline of man the way  
To purity and endless life with God.

He said to me, beginning his discourse,



## The Colloquy

“ Thou hast considered the intention shown  
In Nature as a guiding principle  
And knowest well what refuge Faith has found  
And Piety, in Teleology ;  
For Moses, Zoroaster, Hesiod, Job,  
Anaxagoras, Zeno, Sokrates,  
Perceiving the proportions which exist  
In Nature as of causes and effects,  
Inferred a Ruling Power and Providence ;  
Or Newton, Kepler, and Copernicus,  
Through observation, study most profound,  
Pronounced the structure of the Universe,  
The simplest of arrangements that could be ;  
So represented that the only world  
We know, or can conceive as possible,  
Is one where Order, Law, and Reason reign.

God ruling all,—this ages have proclaimed.  
God keeping all,—this is the sum of faith.  
Though Hebrew and Chaldean seers presumed  
Too much and writers of the Church since then,  
When they declared, that out of nothing God  
In the beginning made the Heaven and Earth  
And all in them,—ourselves, out of the ground  
Created very last ; for we are not  
Any such handiwork ;—the Universe  
Not an anthropomorphic mechanism,  
Nor brought forth by some cataclysmic bursts  
Of energy, nor by apocalypse  
As suddenly of the material worlds  
And their whole life through a divine decree,  
But brought forth by causations numberless

## Conversation XVIII

And infinitely serial and prolonged.  
To show intelligent design and end,  
We need not necessarily assume  
That anything was wrought by miracle,  
Much less that aught was out of nothing made;  
Nor take the burden on us to account  
For one or more direct creative acts  
In space by an external agency,  
As if by hand one had built up the worlds  
Or worked as an external architect,  
On special and on local organisms.  
Nor is there need to limit or degrade  
Discourse on Immanent Finality,  
By holding that man is the end of all  
And that whatever has become exists  
Exclusively for his own benefit,  
Since Providence permits what he has held  
As evil and disastrous in extreme,  
And even has the full provision made  
In Nature for his deadliest enemies.  
Man is a sharer in the Universe  
Of God's unlimited beneficence,  
With myriad other creatures that have life;  
Who, in the Universe, is only one  
Of that infinity of things which were  
Before he was and had the need of them,  
And that infinity of things which still  
Exists but serves no human purposes,  
And which to claim as ours is robbery.

This, though, we may assume in argument:  
Whatever is, is by Intelligence,

## The Colloquy

Revealing in becoming processes  
Analogous to our own reasoning—  
As our ideals shape in mechanism,  
Since Nature's evolutions correspond  
So very nearly with man's industry;  
Our functions, instincts, industries alike,  
A chain of means adapted to an end.  
As fully this assume:—that Providence  
Has wisely portioned out to everything  
Means to the end for which it came to be;  
Or elements have held from very first  
Essence and quality determinate  
The most precise; the habitable worlds  
And all of their innumerable life  
A pre-existence in ideal form;—  
Directive, formative the Universe,  
Anticipating what itself becomes.  
This, too, we may assume:—that everything,  
Serving its special ends or its own need  
Supplies, serves somewhat every other kind;  
As when the animals at burrowing,  
And worms and insects, boring, turn the soil  
And pulverize it, suiting their own use,  
So greatly aid the human husbandman;  
Or bees and wasps, when gathering their food,  
The flowers fertilize and so provide  
For other insects, birds and beasts and man,  
The nourishing and palatable fruit;  
Or Nature's various agencies combine  
In a rude sympathy and sacrifice,  
Whereby each one, pursuing its own aims,  
Confers something of benefit on all.

## Conversation XVIII

### II

In Nature there is seen a providence,  
Fitting the world for its abundant life.  
And manifest the immanence of God  
In all phenomena,—in living forms;  
And the procession of the Spirit seen  
Through evolution of the moral world,  
In the long line of physical descent,—  
In what has elevated or refined,  
Or war, or worship, law or government,  
Art, music, oratory, poetry,  
Or the perception of the beautiful;  
Determining before descent began,  
Uplifting, guiding still and perfecting.

In human history, how clearly seen  
The immanence of God and providence!  
Not seen alone among a chosen few  
In highly favored lands and prosperous,  
But seen in want and sorrow oftener,—  
Man's forced migrations over land and sea,  
His conflicts, toil, privation, sacrifice.  
The sufferings of which we make complaint,  
And hardships borne, how wondrously repaid  
In moral excellence and fortitude!  
Our limitations, seeming weaknesses  
How rich in resources! in aptitudes!  
For how advantageous the period  
Of infancy, as gradually prolonged  
In us through years, when with it we compare  
The quick maturity of animals!

## The Colloquy

The helplessness of childhood strengthening  
Or making permanent the family,  
And yielding, too, that mental pliancy  
For teachableness and submissiveness  
To discipline. And profit now to us  
The hardships and privations undergone  
By our progenitors in savagery,  
In barbarism, through which there were evolved  
The habits of coöperating groups,—  
The family, the gens, the tribal league  
And nationality, establishing  
The institutions of society.

What gain to us the servitude that gave  
The fixed industrial habits to our race!  
And gain the despotisms, authorities,  
Which have made man submissive to restraint.  
To Brahmanism and to the Papacy,  
Corrupt, oppressive, and idolatrous,  
The last, well meriting the epithet  
Opprobrious of the Apocalypse,  
*The Scarlet Woman*, what the debt we owe!  
What vast experiences of inner life  
And deep philosophy the East has given!  
While, through the tireless efforts of the Church,  
The warring nations of a continent  
Were into close confederacy brought,  
Prophetic of still wider fellowship,—  
A universal confraternity.  
E'en to the hardest of environments  
And hostile elements we owe advance:  
What precious energies our Northern clime,



## Conversation XVIII

Or Winter's blasts and ice bestow on us!  
To most destructive agents, too, we owe  
Advancement in enlightenment and peace:  
Through the discovery of fulminates,  
And making firearms, man has gained control  
Over the brutish forces of the world,  
And great, in common worth, their use has proved!  
Equipping equally the artless boor  
With feudal baron and the armored knight,  
The weakest, equally with strongest ones.  
And war, to what brief periods now brought  
By rifled cannon and the needle gun!  
Even the wickedest of men are made  
The instruments of good: the conqueror,  
Not thinking of the right, has put down wrong;  
While tragedies of sin and suffering  
Have heralded reform and higher life.

And seen in violence and cruelty,  
Ofttimes, the testing of pure principles,  
Or rudest, harshest methods educate  
And ultimately quicken and refine.  
As the wild mother teaches her young brood,  
The way of self-dependence, self-defense,  
Quite weaning them of love and driving forth,  
As fugitives from the maternal nest,  
So have the generations of mankind  
Passed under tutelage;—their lessons learned,  
To persevere and last to overcome.  
And doubtless Heaven has purposes concealed,  
Exceeding wise, where we have only seen  
The path of evil and calamity,



## The Colloquy

Or wrongs and sorrows, that have been the lot  
Of Earth's heroic ones, her noble, pure :—  
The godlike suffering, the Muse relates,  
And labors of Prometheus, Herakles,  
Of Theseus, Jason, Samson, Ædipos,  
With those of every age who much endured,—  
Io, Hesione, Andromeda,  
Iphigenia and Antigone ;  
The chaste Lucretia and Virginius  
And St. Perpetua, Felicitas ;  
Isaiah, Epictetus, Cicero ;  
The metropolitan St. Chrysostom,  
Dante, Cervantes, Bruno, Chatterton,  
Columbus, Malespina, Wallenstein,  
Magellan, Joan of Arc, Toussaint L'Ouverture,  
Wat Tyler, Raleigh, Bunyan, Priestly, Paine,  
William of Orange, John of Barneveld,  
And company of saints and patriots,  
Brought to untimely death through martyrdom,  
In exile wasted and imprisonment.

While every people truthfully may claim  
Some special providence attending them,  
Little can we approve the selfishness  
Claiming some tribal-god or savior sent,  
Helpful alone to them, to other ones  
Hateful, malignant, and calamitous.  
Yet manifest the prescience that gave  
Teachers and legislators in the time  
Most opportune, as when in Greece appeared  
Kadmos with the Phœnician alphabet,  
And Solon and Lykurgos giving laws.

## Conversation XVIII

And manifest the providence that moved  
The Hebrew prophet to redeem his race  
And kept watch always over Israel;  
Divine intention manifest that made  
The patriotic Greeks the instruments,  
In war, to save the European states  
From scourge of Oriental despotisms;—  
That gave the free deserved supremacy  
Over the slavish hordes and brutish might;  
For moral forces and intelligence  
Then gained a victory, advantageous  
To Liberty unto the farthest time:—  
Freedom, the gift that Greece bequeathed to us,  
With every art and culture to refine.  
And seen prevision, providence, that chose  
Rome to give law and order to the world,  
And last, when Rome ruled only to oppress  
And enervate, moved the Germanic tribes,  
With energies invincible to gain  
For subject races rightful sovereignty.  
Since seen divine intention manifest  
In wakening the masses to demand  
Enfranchisement and right in property,  
Disowning despotisms, too long usurped;  
That gave to England a Free Parliament  
And Habeas Corpus act, to France the code  
Napoleon; to Russia foresight gave  
For widest empire and prosperity,  
Leading her greatest czar abroad to seek  
Apprenticeship among ship-carpenters;  
Her navy planning and her merchantmen,  
As war or commerce needs; brought from the Fens

## The Colloquy

The Puritan to chasten England's kings,  
And gave him wisdom, power, victory,  
The while he ruled but for his country's good;  
That made Napoleon and his command  
The scourge of Europe's effete monarchies,—  
Giants in modern warfare whom, not men,  
But elements in contest overthrew;  
Whom snows of Russian steppes and icy moors  
Of Beresina warred against, hot sun  
And desert sand and Alp and Appenine.

And clearly manifest the providence  
That brought to the New World those colonists,  
Composite Aryan, or Teutonic mixed  
And Celtic—now a common family;  
Detained the Puritan and Mennonite,  
Pilgrim and Quaker in the Netherlands,  
Acquainting them with the free public schools,  
The secret written ballot, a free press,  
Supremacy of the judiciary  
And right of counsel in defence, withal  
The ancient Anglo-Saxon liberty;  
So furnished with experiences in right,  
That Freedom never need have lack with them.  
Or had they still a narrow tolerance,  
If not by Pilgrim shown, by Puritan,—  
The liberty of conscience for themselves,  
For other faiths a sore discountenance;  
Or would they found a fixed theocracy,  
Doubt and inquiry soon came to revenge  
The slight to reason, for God overruled  
So that they builded better than they knew,—

## Conversation XVIII

Laid the foundations that our states maintain,  
The freest, noblest of democracies.

How manifest the providence, that gave  
The Revolutionary patriots  
Determination and persistency,  
The stanchest heroism, enthusiasm!—  
Wisdom to Franklin,—courage and resolve  
To Adams, Putnam, Schuyler, Marion, Jay,—  
Gave fire to Henry's speech and script of Paine,—  
Resource to Hamilton,—to Jefferson,  
Faith in the capabilities of men.  
Gave dignity of mien to Washington,  
And brought him up to be, of all great men,  
The most successful and most fortunate,  
The first to discipline a soldiery  
In these three fundamental principles:—  
In patience for delay of victory,  
In courage for disaster and defeat,  
In self-restraint, that when their arms had won,  
Law had security, and Liberty.  
One whom no human greatness parallels:  
Not of a royal line, but raised to rule  
Through moral majesty and dignity,—  
In his integrity pre-eminent,  
Unselfish and without the lust for power,  
Magnanimous in peace as brave in war,—  
Example apt for all Republicans  
And rulers of mankind through coming time.  
What spectacle, in all the ages gone,  
Is more sublime than when our president,  
Invested with imperial command,

## The Colloquy

Yields back the trust—lays its proud honors down  
And turns him home, the quiet citizen ?

In later times, when slavery encroached  
Upon our liberties and those in chains  
Cried seemingly in vain, how manifest  
Eternal Justice, All-wise Providence!  
Not choosing the great parties of the land,  
Or Whig, or Democrat, in rivalry,  
But kindly Birney, as the instrument  
In politics, to reaffirm the right  
And to defend; nor agitator called  
Out of the churches,—silent, most of them  
Through fear, or bribed with gold, with patronage,  
To countenance the wrong, but Garrison,  
The Radical, who, risking all, denounced  
Our Constitution as a covenant  
With Hell the while it sanctioned property  
In men, their sale and robbing of their toil.  
Though worthy all of their compatriots,—  
Phillips, the eloquent, calm Emerson,  
And Thoreau, Concord's dreaming Eremite;  
The sainted Channing, at the risk of place,  
Pleading the liberty of every soul,  
And Parker, man's inalienable right;  
With precious earnest names that England gave,—  
Macaulay, Clarkson, Sharpe, and Wilberforce.  
And these as well deserving memory :—  
Doak, Adams, Phelps, iconoclastic Paine;  
Coxe, Rankin, Tyson, Embree, Raymond, Weld,  
Nye, Tappan, Lundy, Palfrey, Frothingham;  
Bold Garrett, philanthropic Fanny Wright.



## Conversation XVIII

Jay, Bacon, Hale, lamented Burlingame ;  
Slade, Bacon, Bowditch, Greene, the sisters Grimke ;  
Chase, Seward, Greeley, Harriet Beecher Stowe ;  
Fremont, May, Wilson, Julian, Stevens, Howe ;  
Thome, Andrews, Higginson, and Horace Mann,  
With noble company at Oberlin ;  
Free-thinking Gerrit Smith, Wright, Pillsbury ;  
Shipley, whose goodness Whittier has told ;  
Bronzed Corwin ; Chapin with the flaming tongue ;  
Inimitable Beecher, loved Starr King ;  
Untiring Giddings ; bluff, impulsive Wade ;  
The colored Douglass pleading for his race ;  
Immortal Sumner ; Lovejoy, worthiest  
Of men, who fell, shot by the savage mob,  
And died, as heroes and as martyrs die,  
For Liberty and for opinion's sake ;  
Our poets, taking up the slave's lament,  
And he, like the old tribal prophet, rude,  
Fanatical, whose apparition went  
Marching along with the avenging hosts,  
His name resounding in triumphal song.

And seen the providence that raised up men  
To guide the Union through the Civil War,—  
Sought after Lincoln in the Western wild,  
As once the prophet sought in Israel,  
The shepherd's son, him to annoint as king.  
Less comely now the choice, not less the man,  
In kingly bearing, such his native strength  
And stature gained ; the child of humblest birth  
And very fewest opportunities,  
Yet for such seeking, choosing, furnished more



## The Colloquy

Than honored lineage and wealth bestow,—  
Given the nerve of Herakles, the wit  
Of wise Odysseus and of Sokrates,  
Thought of Aurelius; the modesty  
To bear him meekly with the weight of power:—  
Unequaled in his gift of common sense  
And insight in the human character,  
Yet to all men the most considerate,  
Most kindly, generous, and pitying;  
And few have won so well immortal fame,  
The glory—the respect of all the Earth.

And seen like providence in other lands,  
In liberating men, enlightening,  
Or sending them relief as they had need,—  
Raised Garibaldi up in Italy,  
And Bolivar, in South America,—  
Hidalgo and the Indian patriot,  
Juarez, to deliver Mexico.

And manifest in culture, in our speech,  
The guidance of an all-wise providence.  
How wonderful is language! what its use!  
What witness of the word that was with God  
In the beginning ere the worlds had form,  
Or we had come to be to say, *I am* !  
And clearly seen in all that has refined:—  
In piety of man that bade him seek  
The harmonies,—the beautiful in art,  
In architecture, sculpture, poetry,  
Music, and eloquence,—in life, the pure,  
The just, the true, the right, the valorous;

## Conversation XVIII

Seen in the wisdom of those ancient seers,  
Who taught in Egypt, Persia, Palestine,  
Assyria, China, India, Greece; seen in  
The Saxon Reformation of the Church  
And in the radical reforms proposed  
By the Encyclopedists—protestants,  
Iconoclasts, and disillusionists,  
Who warred against assumed authority;  
Of late, in gain of reason, tolerance,  
Through wider education of mankind,  
Through growth of Rational Philosophy,  
Through influence of Free Religionists  
And demonstrable scientific truth.

Ourselves and all our gain, what witnesses  
To the great providence that makes us heirs,  
In line of heritage, to those who gave  
Disinterested service to mankind!—  
The mighty dead, heroes, and patriots,  
Sages, reformers, teachers, forerunners,  
Discoverers, inventors, laborers,  
Founders of states, lawgivers, men of faith,  
Thinkers, investigators, questioners,  
As many as have honorable fame,  
And lives of sweetest piety and worth  
With company of the immortal bards.”—

Reminded by this mention of a debt  
Myself was owing, I here took the risk  
Of incivility to interrupt  
So grand an argument. “Permit,” I said,  
“My tribute to the noble company

## The Colloquy

On whom so much I leaned,—the most on him,  
That old Ionian minstrel, whose proud song  
Of great Achilles and much suffering,  
Much traveling Odysseus wearies not;  
Leaned on the Grecian dramatists who knew  
The woes that came to Ædipos, to house  
Of Agamemnon; of the curse the gods  
Pronounced—the brand stamped inerasable  
On the adulteress and murderess.  
In spotless white robed these, the saintliest,  
Alkestis and Antigone; or told,  
How to the rock Prometheus had been chained,  
His naked form bruised on the piercing flints,  
While carrion vultures ate his living flesh,  
Who, helping man, incurred the wrath of Jove.  
Leaned on the Mantuan—of smoothest verse,  
And on the exiled Florentine; and leaned  
On these not less, the glory of our tongue,—  
Shakespeare creating his ideal race  
And Milton chanting with the Seraphim.  
How much on these, the Muse's younger care!—  
Walking with Wordsworth in the woodland wilds,  
With Tennyson to hear the singing birds,  
The babbling brooks and music of the waves;  
Sometime, in company with native bards,  
Now wearying with age, or those who late  
Closed on the Earth their notes harmonious.  
If my own memory should follow down,  
Echo of olden bards in the New World,  
What joy would be the thought, to share in meed  
Of his sweet fame, my countryman, who sung  
Of Hiawatha and Evangeline!

## Conversation XVIII

This mention, too, I owe a moralist,  
Epaphradotus' slave, who ne'er forgot  
The rule of piety and cheerfulness,—  
Tortured and maimed in body, exiled, sold,  
An Irus in his poverty yet rich  
In that he to the Spirit lived; of Heaven  
Favored the more and to immortals dear.  
With him, the Thrakian prophet-bard who taught,  
That whatsoever is, is born of Love,—  
Imperial Love that would not live alone  
Prisoned in the Abyss, and out of it  
Went forth to universal sovereignty,  
Holding in undisputed sway alike  
The elements and souls of men,—the life  
Of all that lives and force of all that moves.”

Again resuming his discourse, he said,  
“ And seen in the whole history of man,  
Prevision, guidance, helping providence,  
Alike in what the Physicist presumes  
The course of natural development,  
The Fatalist and the Materialist,  
Dynamical necessity alone,  
The Theologian, a decree of God.  
Seen in the varied stores, contributed  
By men in every age, of every clime,—  
In the imperishable monuments  
Of human skill, what labor, learning, faith,  
And genius have immortalized; seen in  
The proud achievements and discoveries  
Rewarding modern enterprise, and seen  
In the accumulated wealth of Earth,

## The Colloquy

In architecture, arms, and implements  
Of husbandry,—in decorative art,  
In dress, in furniture, and cookery ;  
The measurement of what the race has won  
Through mental evolution, moral growth,—  
Mankind's magnificent maturity,  
Weighed with the artlessness of the first pair.  
For so it pleased the Infinite to plan  
The method of our life, in slowest growth  
Up through interminable lower forms,  
And the slow discipline of struggle since,  
In often baffled ignorance, in want,—  
In suffering untold, and sacrifice.

### III

Not in design,—not in causality  
Alone, is seen the Providence of God,  
But often seen, as he reveals himself  
In ethical relation with mankind,  
Or gleaming through the thoughts, the characters,  
The work of noblest personalities.  
It is in the unwritten law of right  
And wrong, implanted in the minds of men,  
In those ideals of the pure and good  
Held by the human race collectively.  
It is in the persistence of the saint,  
In self-denial of the moralist,  
In the discoverer's enthusiasm,  
The altruist's disinterestedness.  
Or it is in the eccentricity  
Of genius, in ambition's lofty aim.



## Conversation XVIII

It is in modesty, in shame, remorse,—  
Is in the redness of the maiden's cheeks,  
Is in the flame that fires the heroes' eyes,  
Is in the coward's fear, the sinner's guilt,  
In evil destiny that follows crime;  
Is that, which to ourselves returns the wrongs  
We do to others,—that which makes, at last,  
Our very selfishness serve other men.  
It is in seeking what we have not seen.  
It is in loving what we have not known.  
It is in reminiscence of the past,  
In the prevision of the things to come;  
Is in the purpose of the noblest men,  
Their ceaseless labor to convince their kind  
Of sin, of righteousness, of just awards;  
Is in the innate consciousness we have  
Of infinite and of eternity;  
Is in the oldest, widest of beliefs,—  
That memory, responsibility,  
And hope extend into a future world.  
It is in what so moves the sensitive  
And the imaginative soul, that looks  
Outward upon the wondrous spectacle  
Which Nature ever offers to our view.  
It is what makes all things strive to ascend,  
And, in ascent, forever have beyond  
A higher excellence to be attained.

See, in the course that Retribution takes,  
The order of Omniscient Providence.  
It cannot be by Chance or Fate, that sin  
Has in itself its certain punishment,



## The Colloquy

And that no wrong in history escapes  
Deservéd penalty, though long delayed;  
Nor yet by Chance, that Nature punishes  
Thus signally infractions of her laws;  
Never by Chance, that righteousness secures  
To us a constantly increasing joy,  
And sin so soon its loathing and disgust;  
Nor that repentance for the wrongs we do  
Is always met by a redemptive force.

Even the sin itself shall give account,  
And this not wholly one of loss to men:—  
For choosing good, or choosing ill in time,  
Each one accomplishes his destiny;  
The criminal and most immoral man,  
As is the holiest saint, the richer made  
Through exercise of personality.  
Unwisely choosing, we deceive ourselves,  
Yet are the richer through experience;  
And, as God judges us, no one in vain  
Has made his choice but for a purpose lives.

In error those who teach, that one through sin  
May fall to depths that Mercy cannot reach,  
Or from whose woe appeal is never heard.  
The most degraded, sinful, wickedest,  
Has yet such treasure, virtue in his soul,  
That Heaven seeks it as for a jewel lost.  
As Augustine has said, *No human heart  
Is quite a sanctuary, and not one,  
Polluted as a sewer and corrupt.*  
We may not judge as Egypt's priests presumed,

## Conversation XVIII

And Greeks, who stationed in the Underworld  
The judges Hades and Persephone,  
And Minos, Radamanthys, Æakos,  
To separate the race in final doom;  
For pardon, still, the chief of sinners finds,  
As in the *Ædipos Koloneus* shown.

Trust me, the moral state of none is fixed,  
Unchangeably at death, in Hell or Heaven,  
Perpetuating torment endlessly,  
And bliss, as endless and monotonous,  
Since those in Paradise long none the less  
For purity and wisdom unattained,  
Than we, still burdened with our Earthly ills.  
Probation is not limited to Time,  
Or by locality; nor our free will,  
Restricted to a brief and endless choice,  
But all, by their experience profiting,  
Will sometime tire of sin's illusiveness.  
Even the saintliest elect so mark  
The way of moral gain and blessedness:  
Through sin's bond-service and its sorrow brought,  
Through duty owned and world of sense subdued,—  
All, to the infinitely perfect One,  
Their ever-upward journey traveling.

And this, the sweetest thought of man,—that God  
Loves all and will save all, is found the best  
Interpretation of humanity  
Related to the scheme of Providence  
And mystery of moral discipline.

## The Colloquy

And surely what will happen finally  
Will, on the whole, be just and rational.

In error those who teach that Christ will come,  
In some far future day, to judge the world.  
Quite other coming of the Lord I see,  
Since not delayed until the end of Time;  
Coming each day, each hour of life, at death,  
To judge,—approving or condemning us.  
The Son of Man, in other coming seen,  
Than in the flaming clouds of Heaven enthroned;  
Not rising upward from a damnéd world  
Like Moloch; not, as fabled Noah once,—  
When in the ark he took his family,  
The seven only chosen of mankind,—  
Two of each kind of beasts, fowls, creeping things,—  
Leaving all life beside, none pitying,  
Without to perish in the watery waste;  
Not, in the spectacle the millions dread,  
By superstition taught and kept in awe.  
I see him as in Galilee he walked  
Long years ago, still near to everyone,  
In discipline of trial, toil, neglect;  
Himself made perfect through his suffering,—  
That righteous one assumed from among us,  
Not made our judge, but an example given,  
The perfect with unworthiness compared.  
One, only, is our judge and one our law,  
God immanent in all and exigent.

## Conversation XVIII

### IV

True, much is wanting yet in this discourse  
To satisfy, but difficult the proof  
Of what we know to certainty exists.  
I know I am, yet fail in proving it;  
I know God is, is the most certain truth  
Of all, but fail in proving it because  
The things, I bring to prop my argument,  
Are less a certainty than God himself."

I said, " A God unseen by mortal eyes,  
Unknown to us as personality;  
Or manifest, how very rarely come!  
At what long intervals in history!  
Or dimly shown in human character."

He answered: " Often shining forth, as seen  
By seers of every age and men of faith,  
As many as have to the spirit lived.  
And sometimes seen by us,—seen in the face  
Of one who loves when gaining loved one's troth.  
Seen when the mother first looks on her child,  
Rejoicing in its life; seen as the child  
Grows conscious of the mystery of life.  
And sometimes visible to us in calm  
And peace of soul, and in heroic deed,—  
In time of victory, in services  
Disinterestedly bestowed on men.  
And awful, fearful, dreadful, sometimes seen,  
And yet unutterably beautiful,  
Impressive! we have seen it through our tears.

## The Colloquy

We see it in the face of dying one ;  
We note the absence of it in the dead.

O, what it must have been to see the face  
Of Jesus when he taught the multitudes,  
When preaching on the Mount, or when he said,  
*Suffer the little ones to come to me !*  
What view of the divine, could we have seen  
The face of Zoroaster when he told  
His vision of the triumph of the good  
Over the evil, or as he disclosed  
The incorruptibly pure principle !  
Greatest of prophets ! nearest to the stars,—  
Teacher of Persia, Israel, the world.  
What vision of the spirit's victory—  
The patient, lovely, beautiful, divine,  
Could we have seen the face of Gautama  
The hour he was enlightened,—when desire  
Had gone, pure understanding having come ;  
Exemption come from birth, from death—old age  
And premature decay, securing then  
Deservedly his apotheosis,  
Though yet upon the Earth in mortal form !  
Or could we have seen Moses when he stood  
In Pharaoh's court pleading for Israel,  
Or Sokrates, standing in ecstasy,  
Or when in Athens making his defense.  
What vision of the spirit dwelling in  
And shining forth, lighting its fragile clay  
If Epictetus we had seen converse  
On Morals—vindicating Providence !  
And had we seen the Grecian dramatists,



## Conversation XVIII

Acting their solemn plays and tragedies,  
And Homer when he sung his Iliad !  
Or had we seen the sculptor Phidias,  
When he unveiled Athena Parthenon,  
Or when he finished the Olympian Zeus ;  
And glowing countenance of him who made  
Apollo Belvidere when it was done,  
And those three Rhodian artists, when they shaped  
That serpent-knotted group, Laoköon,  
And him at Milo when he had attained  
The perfect in his art, a worshiper,  
Silent in awe before his handiwork ;  
Or Raphael and Michael Angelo  
When their proud works looked down to them from  
dome  
And nave,—from oldest, richest galleries  
And courts allotting immortality ;  
Or Titian, Turner, Tintoret, inspired  
With the unspeakable sublimities,  
Expressed in varying phenomena ;  
Or Shakespeare when his Hamlet was complete ;  
Or great composers in their loftiest strains,  
Beethoven, Handel, Hayden, Mozart, Bach ;  
Or Siddons walk in glory on the stage.  
What visions of the Spirit, lightening  
Yet Earthly glory and man's proudest deeds,  
Must one have had to see Napoleon  
After his victory at Austerlitz,—  
Or Cromwell when dispersing Parliament,  
Or Cæsar when he crossed the Rubicon,  
Or Frederick when making his attack,  
At Leuthen on the armies of Prince Karl,—



## The Colloquy

Or Luther when his theses were affixed  
To the old castle church at Wittenberg,  
And when at Worms he stood alone before  
Imperial majesties and hierarchs,  
Invincible as those strong battlements  
Eternal Justice raised in Heaven's defense!  
Or had we seen Columbus at the prow  
When in the far horizon land appeared,—  
Or Jefferson when ready to submit  
To waiting patriots and farthest time,  
His draft of resolutions, that declared  
The independence of America,—  
Or Washington when taking his command,  
When sinking to his rest secure in fame,  
Or Lincoln when he spoke at Gettysburg."

I said to him, " These as the gods have wrought  
And spoken. Are they as the gods or men  
Living as personalities, or merged  
In the one will ? "

He answered: " It pleased him  
Who gave the life to all, that we should live  
From him forever separate entities,  
As in our moral freedom manifest;  
For we may do what pleases him the most,  
Or do the things which he the least approves.  
Though, as I have observed, his love and grace  
And goodly chastisements at last prevail  
On all—redeeming all and perfecting."

" But evil still remains," I said, " the strife,—  
The whole creation groaning, travailing

## Conversation XVIII

In pain together, thus obedient  
Apparently to kosmic law, but how  
Excusable to helpless sufferers  
And innocent, or ever justified  
By the Great Consciousness and Love Divine,  
E'en by its serving moral discipline ?  
While clouds and shadows intervene and night  
Of death is yet between us and the dawn  
Of sinless worlds and immortality."

He answered, " These remain, but not without  
A purpose visible, or, if not seen  
In Time, have promise in Eternity.  
The evil of the world is incident  
To finite imperfection and free will ;  
Or found to be the means to certain ends,—  
As agency in moral discipline,  
A metaphysical necessity ;  
Or in acquirement is adaptive found,  
As when the lower forms of life are made  
To feed the higher, or as Death removes  
One generation that another one  
May keep in youth and health the organism."

I said, " Continuing the strife, the woe,  
As Nature still asserts the selfishness  
Seen in the natural ascent of life,  
Nor brings to end Death's lamentable reign."

Then he, taking the argument, replied,  
" Yet Earth, with all its evils, miseries,  
Its strife, pain, woe, calamity, and death,

## The Colloquy

Is justified in what we are, in what  
Its awful discipline has brought to us.  
But for the care, the trial, tempting sin,—  
But for the weakness, misery around,  
All virtues we had lacked and sense of right,—  
Our courage, pity, patience, fortitude.  
And never yet has anything of good  
Or beautiful been born except of pain;  
Nor is there aught worth our remembering,  
Not costing suffering and sacrifice.  
On every life some sore affliction falls  
And some hard discipline to strengthen it,—  
Earth's noblest ones afflicted to the end.  
As one long bearing trouble says at last,  
*To perfect me and save me it was given.*  
As other one, enduring much, exclaims,  
*O wondrous ministry of sorrow! pain!*  
*O wonderful provision of the cross!*

The woes of man not less than glorious deeds  
Have raised to Heaven his eloquence and song.  
But needless, seemingly, the discipline  
Of pain and trial, burdensome through life,  
If death ends all that these have perfected.  
It must be that our travel here is more  
Than going through this round of toil and care,—  
That this distressful Earthly pilgrimage  
Has compensation other than the grave.  
What can the meaning be of those restraints  
Religion has imposed and moral law,  
To which long generations have been born,  
Unless it is preparing us to live

## Conversation XVIII

Nearer perfection in another state ?  
As one has written, though, *The sufferings*  
*Of life on Earth are not comparable*  
*With the felicity to be revealed*  
*To us and glory in the world to come.*  
As other one has said of chastisements,  
*We bear them first and after take the crown :*  
Thus our Great Educator foreordained  
And Love Divine prepared the way to Heaven.

### V

There is yet much remaining to be told  
Of wrong and woe in human history ;  
In war, in toil, in faith, in government,—  
Our savagery, our inhumanity,  
Since man, by his unreason, willfulness,  
Impedes the nobler order manifest,  
In Nature's unobstructed vehicle.  
Yet I would plead the good and not despair,  
Either of man or of High Heaven's design ;  
Would, with the Roman sage, appeal to God,  
Addressing him in the same confidence,  
*Thou wilt do well for me and for the world.*

True, Providence moves slowly through the years  
But surely moves : and certain the advance  
Of Justice, Principle, and Liberty,  
And weakening the while of brutish power.  
And I have reasons many to believe  
Each coming generation of our race  
Will have a deeper sorrow for Earth's pain,—

## The Colloquy

A livelier sympathy and tenderness.  
And kindlier concern for all that lives.

Sometime, trust me, the strife, the pain will end,—  
The veil be lifted up, and we behold  
The meaning of this world of sin and wrong.

And something more I find to lift my hopes :  
Our farthest ancestors began their life  
On the first step of an ascending stair,  
And we, ourselves, may make advance upon  
What former generations have attained.  
And here is weightier concern for us  
Than in the awful problem of descent,—  
It is in the great trust we hold for heirs  
Soon to inherit our estate in life  
And store of good and bad in character.  
We owe to others, yet to come, a world  
Less sinful, wrongful, vengeful, animal,  
Than we have known; or they should take the gain  
We are now making on the past, themselves  
Advance on it and give to farther heirs,  
A heritage replete in every worth.

Not that all sin and sorrow here will end  
And discipline of pain, or men e'er reach  
Perfection here or immortality.  
Scarcely need any one reflect to know  
That we have no abiding city here,—  
That all relations of humanity,  
Our kindred and our goodly fellowships,  
Are constantly dissolving as we go



## Conversation XVIII

To the Eternal World. Dear, then, the thought,  
That those who go and those yet here are one,  
Whom Paul, writing to the Ephesians, named  
*The family of man in Heaven and Earth ;—*  
As Aryan fathers said in ritual,  
*They who within the sphere of Earth are stationed*  
*Or who are settled now in realms of pleasure.*

Are they not there as in the vision seen,—  
The angels, Kherubim, and Seraphim?  
And dwelling, seen beyond the starry spheres,  
Risen, enfranchised, sainted, glorified  
Our loved, by death divided from us here ? ”

I said to him, “ Could we but rest assured  
Of the reality of those sweet dreams,  
And entrance sometime to those fair retreats. ”

He answered, taking up the argument :  
“ It does not yet appear what we shall be.  
As the Sun’s light obscures the light of stars,—  
The brilliant constellations of the heavens,  
Which, if the darkness did not intervene,  
Would never to our eyes be visible  
And we would only know the sapphire dome  
By the horizon rimmed surrounding us :  
So yet our vision, in the world of sense,  
Waits for the passing of what now obscures  
Or lies between us and the Spirit-world.

But we have seen a part, and what remains  
Will fall within our vision as we do



## The Colloquy

Love's works and rise to grander moral heights;  
Each traveler now on his weary way,  
Like Bunyan's pilgrim, sometimes gaining sight  
Of Beulah and the Mount Delectable;  
At times of that fair city upon high,  
Not made by hands, whose builder is the Lord;  
At times, at last, as martyred Stephen saw,  
All Heaven and glory opened to our view.

Though still by faith more than by sight we walk,  
We have made gain upon this pilgrimage  
And nearer is the refuge which we seek,—  
That immortality not far from us,  
That immortality to which our works,  
Or good or ill, will follow after us.

O Lord, thou askest but thine own. So prayed  
St. Augustine and did confess: *Our souls*  
*Are restless, waiting their return to thee,*  
*Since for thyself thou hast created us.*

## VI

Dost still ask what thou art ? what thou wilt be ?  
If fallen soul in earthly prison-house ?  
If a mute force seeking self-consciousness ?  
Or monad struggling up to Infinite ?  
Waitest some miracle that will transform  
And make thee other than thou art ? Thyself  
Bearest the history,—life as evolved  
In the long evolutionary strife.  
What thou art now is type and prophecy,

## Conversation XVIII

Of what thou yet wilt be. The spiritual  
And natural are in accord. Along  
With kosmical development is seen  
Coöperating intellect—the Soul  
All-Immanent, and later man's free will  
And self-advance. The wearisome ascent,  
Halting and slow, of thy long ancestry  
Thou mayst accelerate and sooner mount  
What yet impedes thy way, and overcome.  
True, we are of the elements, clothed on  
By them and limited, yet free to choose  
What we would do; wise as the fabled pair,  
Who of the Tree of Knowledge took and ate  
And knew the good from evil, all become,  
Attaining, even now, those high ideals  
And glory which the prophets have foretold.

And hast thou still occasion to deplore  
The gods and dæmons fallen from their thrones ?  
He lives who was and is and is to come.  
For though the numberless divinities,  
Worshiped and feared these ages long, are gone,  
Lost with the Fable-World and Fairy-land,  
In what is Heaven or Earth the poorer now,  
Since the All-Father yet remains to us ?  
Though all the oracles are dumb and faiths  
Bear not the light of free inquiry now,  
Judgment and Law no less prevail on Earth,—  
As not at Sinai or Olympos seen,  
Enlightenment and the humanities.  
Though all our creeds should fail and sacraments,  
In company with old idolatries,

## The Colloquy

Their ceremonies, orgies, ecstacies,  
Truth yet remains to us and kindly Hope,  
Redeeming Love and Reason's ample light.  
Though sacred books should fail, the life remains  
And God incarnate in the human soul.

### VII

We look above, below, before, around,  
And find him not. Yet he is present here,  
God hidden in all beings, life in all,  
And dwelling, as a witness, in all minds.

Infinite Spirit of the Universe,  
Who art in all, all things comprised in thee,  
Yet from whose being none may lift the veil,  
Nor wisest ever think to comprehend.  
Thou secret of all secrets! Mystery  
Of the Unknowable, Unsearchable!  
Hidden, invisible, yet manifest,  
How wondrously in all phenomena,  
Chemic and vital force and intellect.  
Thou who the everlasting Father art  
Of every creature born in every world,  
Who, when we asked not, knew not, didst confer  
Innumerable blessings on our kind.  
Thou art the understanding of the wise,  
The excellence and virtue of the good,  
The power and the glory of the great,  
Light of our eyes and voice of every speech,  
Thought of the brain and flowing of the blood,  
Our aspiration, hope, perfection gained.

## Conversation XVIII

Thou art the radiance of countless suns,  
Mold of the crystal, color of the leaf,  
The form and energy of elements  
And gravity depending every world.

O vast Divine! whence everything has come,  
What may we ask, that thou hast not bestowed,  
Who givest every good and perfect gift ?  
What gifts return to thee ? what gratitude  
Express in hymn and offering of thanks,  
Since, Lord, to serve thee is our own delight ?

We praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee  
To be the Lord. We bless, we worship thee,  
We glorify thee, we give thanks to thee  
For thy great glory, who alone art God.  
Be thou exalted higher than the heavens,  
Thy glory over all that is in Earth.  
O that all men would praise the Lord, our God!  
People, as congregations worshiping,  
In chant, in psalm, in song, with gladsome voice  
And instruments harmoniously tuned,  
Praise ye the Lord and magnify his name.  
Ye sainted ones and blessed, to glory gone,  
Who by the Tree of Life or Crystal Sea  
Or in the Golden City take abode,  
Hymn to the Father praise unceasingly.  
Ye angels, Kherubim, and Seraphim,  
Ye Virtues, Powers, and Authorities,  
To him, the infinite in majesty,  
Ascribe all praise, all adoration give.  
Ye seasons of the year and day and night,

## The Colloquy

That come and go continually, praise him  
In march responsive to eternal rhythm.  
Praise him, ye woods, that murmur with the wind;  
Praise him, ye vales, perennially in bloom,  
Ye mists, that gather on the mountain tops,  
Ye fleecy clouds and many tinted skies,  
Ye waves, that rise upon the mighty deeps,  
Ye stars, that give your light to milliard worlds.  
Praise him, all creatures that inhabit Earth,—  
Ye wingéd people, in sweet overture  
From meadow and in leafy covert hid,  
Praise him who has dominion of the air,  
Bearing you softly o'er its wide expanse.  
Cicada, in the stillness of the night,  
And honey-insects, canopied in flowers,  
Make joyful noise and sound the praise of God.  
Let Universal Nature sing and praise  
The Father's name; world without end. Amen.

## CONVERSATION XVIII

RESTATEMENTS. BY THE TEACHER

### I

*That happens now which in eternity  
Ideally was foreordained to be,  
And series of events the thread have spun  
Whereby our life's meandering course has run.*

So wrote the Stoic emperor who saw  
A Universe of social parts and law,—  
In all an immanent intelligence  
And order, unity, and providence;—

An organism with every part employed,  
The densest solid and the seeming void;  
Becoming one while other disappears,  
The whole abiding through the ceaseless years.

Wouldst know what was the first? what will be  
last?

Thou the epitome of all the past;  
Prophetic thou of all that yet will be,—  
Know thyself and thou know'st Infinity.



## The Colloquy

Dost weep ? Dost murmur ? Wouldst complain of  
Fate ?

Weak mortal, bearing thus all being's weight !  
To weep is human-like and to despair,  
Godlike it is to suffer and to bear.

Art told it is a curse that thou dost live ?  
Strive of thyself some good account to give.  
What treasure hidden in this clod of Earth !  
May be one talent or five talents' worth,

Or priceless gem committed to thy trust,  
Came it from shining star or grimy dust,  
Do thou increase it, keep in purity,  
Until the lender asks return of thee.

Nor for the ills of life make thy lament,  
Nor mourn that death to one, to all, is sent ;  
Death is adaptive, not a penalty,  
A mercy and not a calamity,

Permitting life's increase and happiness  
Of generations coming to possess  
Their share of time, then, going too their way,  
Continue the succession endlessly.

Ourselves upon the Earth had not found space  
But that through death one gives to other place ;  
Infirm and sated Age yields up the strife  
And Youth, untiring, is the heir to life.

## Conversation XVIII

The dying yield to Nature but her own,—  
Sweet flowers bloom where the sere leaves were  
blown

And the rich vine and plenteous harvests grow,  
Whose roots are nourished by the dead below.

*Ah me, we say, that least there is should give  
Its life in pain that other one may live !*  
Yet find here what must else be sought in vain—  
The nourishment that doth all life sustain.

Although we see not nor can comprehend,  
Each part that is accomplishes its end ;  
And Nature as a whole is found to be  
Perfection of completeness, harmony.

### II

Such is the order and the plan of things,  
Which last, to all, full compensation brings ;  
All toiling, striving, suffering the pain,  
Contributing, each one, to other's gain.

As one before me has computed it—  
All having somehow, somewhere, benefit ;  
Even the loss made credit in account,—  
As loss and gain one aggregate amount.

Nay, not for sin's sake only, as some show,  
Are we born in the world of strife and woe,  
But in the darkness sent our light to try,—  
To test in loathing mire our purity.

## The Colloquy

Thou askest : “ Why does God cast us away,  
“ If we are his, in helpless infancy ?  
“ Why plan for us this wearisome ascent,  
“ In æons measuring our banishment ?

“ To swirling chaos first commit our care,  
“ To flame and wave and to mephitic air ;  
“ Or laid, as feeble germs in ooze and slime,  
“ A single cell to wait long-nursing Time ?

“ Or to such low beginning doom each kind ?  
“ Nourish, in the brute brain, the human mind ?  
“ Or, when providing for the highest life,  
“ Evolve these animalisms and set at strife ?

“ His children, if for Heaven he would prepare,  
“ Why not at very first have placed us there ?  
“ As parent, why not to his own revealed  
“ And not from all unsearchably concealed ? ”

It is that man has needs, more than the good  
As we have measured it,—of fortitude,  
Of heroism, denial, sacrifice—  
The discipline we oftenest despise.

God knew the excellence of savagery  
Compared with satisfying luxury,  
Dwelling as near man in that low estate,  
As now with wealthy, privileged, and great.

Nor we, living in lowest form, were sent  
Away from him in utter banishment ;

## Conversation XVIII

For least things living lives as near to him  
As flaming Kherubim and Seraphim.

### III

Deep the inquiry, *How came we to live?*  
Vast speculation, the reply we give!  
But near each one of us the answer lies,—  
Is in the very dust which we despise:

For in the dust, thought lifeless, is concealed  
What in the highest life there is revealed.  
God is in all and does to all supply  
A vital and transforming energy.

Omniscient is the order which we see,—  
Continuous, transmuting agency;  
Or forming crystal, cell, bud, leaf, and grain,  
Or mind evolving in the nerve and brain.

God is in all,—in Nature's vast profound,  
In least, in limitless, his being found;  
Ourselves in his resplendent brightness shown,—  
The life of God reflected in our own.

There is a temple closing us about,—  
God is within it and he is without,  
Not visible, but a sweet consciousness,—  
Communion, solace, comfort, tenderness.

I have the sense of God, of Heaven's deep joy,  
Of self,—none can this consciousness destroy.  
I was before this outward house of woe  
And born to Love, to Love Eternal go.

## The Colloquy

### IV

Art still disquieted ? What thou wouldst be,  
Like desert mirage vanishing from thee ?  
Trust thou in God, the one reality,  
Whom, if thou wouldst, thou couldst not put away.

God is,—nor Psalmist nor the Seer of old  
Nor ever Saint his providence has told ;  
Who, taking from us all, gives us yet more,  
For loss in Time Eternity's rich store.

Who, for the soul here burdened with distress,  
Offers the gift of ceaseless happiness ;  
For farthest traveler has this surprise,  
To sleep Death's sleep and wake in Paradise."

## CONVERSATION XIX

### MINISTRIES

#### I

WHEN the teacher to a close  
Brought his speech, a mystic rose  
In the Chapel, to extend  
Comment pertinent and lend  
Knowledge only inly seen,—  
(Surest guide though that has been;)—  
Or he would set forth the scheme  
That shall perfect and redeem—  
Plan by Loving Kindness made,  
But through Pain and Sorrow laid.

“ First,” he said, “ I will review  
Other’s work, then raise up new.

As the Eremite has told,  
There are evils manifold :—  
Countless ills and countless foes,  
Countless wrongs and countless woes,—  
Toil, want, war, calamity,  
Death upon us in the way,



## The Colloquy

And all that is visible,  
Evanescent, changeable.

Yet the Heaven and Earth remain,—  
That which wastes builds up again,  
Change itself the permanent,  
Causing, keeping, provident.  
As in fashion we adorn,  
Putting off the old and worn,  
So the Kosmos puts away  
Old and worn and dead each day,  
For the morrow's grander view  
Of things beautiful and new.

And in this take courage, heart :  
Not of all is lost least part,  
For in least thing that exists,  
Infinite selfhood subsists.  
And not any wrong or sin  
But this self is dwelling in,—  
Judges it, condemns, destroys,  
Or to purify employs.  
It is this, (least understood,)  
That from evil brings forth good ;  
Overrules usurping Might,  
Makes for Virtue and for Right.  
As from Epictetus heard,  
Virtue is its own reward  
And Vice has this consequent—  
Bringing its own punishment ;  
As the poet Æschylus  
Nemesis unveils to us,

## Conversation 𐬰𐬀𐬎

Showing that each guilty deed  
Holds within itself the seed  
Of its punishment and cure.  
And, though seeming ever sure,  
Ahriman's long reign of woe,  
Certain is its overthrow.  
Or the evil itself tends  
To the happiest of ends,  
In that through the wrong and pain  
Virtue, Truth, and Love have gain:  
And our loss and suffering  
Are swift animals to bring  
The perfection we would win,—  
And the loathéd, baleful sin,  
Servant, too, of moral laws,  
The soul's chariot Heavenward draws.  
As the Concord poet-seer,  
Writing on this, has made clear:  
Good and Evil, Love and Crime,  
Going side by side through Time,  
Tending both to the same goal—  
Good, at last, of every soul.

Sinners, saints, together go  
Through this pilgrimage of woe;  
Sinners, saints, as soon, as late,  
Pass together Heaven's high gate.

## II

There is one and only force  
Regnant in the Universe,

## The Colloquy

Love that prisoned would not stay,  
That leads all on Upward Way:  
That in endless surge and strife  
Kindles, keeps the flame of life  
Or begets and brings to birth  
Whatsoe'er has life on Earth,—  
Blade and leaf and stalk and flower,  
Germs and seeds, with latent power  
To produce and bear their own,  
O'er the wide land thickly sown,  
And of moving, sentient forms,  
Those interminable swarms.  
God, at first, ordained it so  
Love should on this errand go:  
Lord of Love would have us come  
To him as the final home;  
Or the soul seeks its retreat  
In the Lord, its native seat.

### III

Though, with strong persistency,  
Fraud repeats her ancient lie,  
As we Light and Reason heed,  
Truth is found and honest deed.

To none God shows enmity,  
Unto none partiality;  
Wisdom, blessedness, and grace  
Are not of a chosen race.  
Not one faith or formula,  
Only, marks the perfect way:

## Conversation 𐌹𐌺𐌹

To all nations God has given  
Guides to lead the way to Heaven,—  
Prophets, Leaders, Saviors, Sages,  
Suited to all climes and ages.

Nor needs he one to proclaim  
Or reveal his glorious name,  
Nor one coming here to tell  
In what far world he doth dwell  
When all life shows him to be  
Present, acting ceaselessly,—  
When the Heaven and Earth declare,  
God is, and is everywhere.

Never aught from nothing springs,  
Cause there must be for all things;  
God could not of nothing take  
Whereof Earth and man to make.

Such the deep-laid mystery  
Of Divine Economy,—  
Interwoven thus each part,  
Seemingly by magic art,  
That whatever is depends  
On all else that with it blends.  
Part I am of earth, sea, sky,—  
Whate'er fills immensity;  
And all these are part of me,  
Atom, or Infinity.  
Though from God all things proceed,  
He of all become has need;  
Atom lost, then lost the whole,—

## The Colloquy

Death of one, of every soul.  
Not a moment could we live  
If the life he did not give,  
Nor could God himself exist  
If naught did in him subsist.  
I need God and without me  
Hurled from throne himself would be.

Paradoxal as may seem  
I have always been with him,  
Yet am separate, alone,—  
Do what he would not have done :  
In the cycle of Free Will  
Choosing good or choosing ill,—  
Free to sin and to rebel,  
To take up my bed in Hell ;  
Yet once there, as surely he  
Will go and abide with me,  
Nor the awful æons wait  
Me in Heaven to reinstate ;  
For as shame and penitence  
Humble me, in eminence  
He will afterward exalt ;  
Or I will for selfish thought,  
Vain and proud, as low be brought.

Nor is our probation done,  
Having lost here, having won :  
Earth has not had all our life,  
Death ends not the spirit's strife,—  
What at death is incomplete  
Future has to finish it.

## Conversation 𐄂𐄂𐄂

### IV

Wouldst thou know our destiny ?  
Each takes to Eternity  
What he is. Ourselves to know  
Would eternal record show.  
As we write the diary,  
Good or evil of each day,  
The Recording Angel takes  
These same acts and record makes,—  
Not on ample page the name  
Of pure life and without blame,—  
Not upon a fatal scroll  
Name of any damnéd soul,  
But upon ourselves the worth  
Of each day lived on the Earth ;—  
Ineffaceable each fact,  
Every thought, desire, and act,  
Sum of deeds in character  
As we do the right or err.

Somewhat, too, Necessity  
Moves the wheel that turns the clay,  
Molds, thus, everything that is  
As best suits its purposes ;  
Shapes to the divine man's life  
Through the trial here and strife ;—  
Misshaped vessel, twisted, marred,  
Most unseemly rough and scarred,  
Dwarfed and darkened by sin,  
But for jewel held within  
Counted this vexed lump of earth,  
Of incomparable worth.



## The Colloquy

### V

Askest, ' Where is victory  
When strife wages endlessly ?  
When wrongs crushed, when tyrants slain,  
Like Antæos rise again ?  
When the wars that we have won  
Other wars are bringing on ?  
When, not so much hindereth  
Toil and wrong and war and death,  
As doth brutish ignorance,—  
Custom that will not advance,—  
Faith that looks but to the past  
Or to ruin at the last ? '

Yet to him who sees and learns,  
Whose soul for the better yearns,  
Dawns the fair, triumphant day  
Of man's right, equality,  
Exercise of liberty,  
Progress, peace, fraternity.

True, as seen, the world has need  
Now of great heroic deed ;  
Bravest ones to battle wrong,  
Words of fire in speech and song,  
Voice for right and liberty,  
Faith in God more verily :—  
On the foe the quick advance  
For the world's deliverance.  
Would I might in full make known  
All I had in vision shown,  
As I saw the bitter strife  
Here involving every life ;

## Conversation 卅卅

What was lost, what has been won  
Since the struggle was begun,  
What the conquests yet to win  
Ere the end of wrong and sin.

### VI

Rest we, here, our argument—  
With the world, with life content.  
Looking back, what doth remain  
Now to us of ill or pain ?  
As once Job account did give,  
Wrong and loss are relative,—  
The most of our suffering  
In our own imagining:  
And the whole humanity,  
Wending on the Upward Way  
In delusion oftenest  
Of the good it had in quest;—  
Man's first freedom but rewon  
After all the war is done;  
With all idols overthrown  
Man's first faith in God made known;  
With all speculation tried,  
What is claimed and what denied,  
Nothing else doth satisfy  
As Truth, Love, Right, Liberty,  
God and Immortality.  
What is fullest happiness ?  
What is peace and blessedness ?  
Happy knowing one loves thee,  
Happy knowing thou art free,

## The Colloquy

Happy as full hope is given  
Of Eternal life in Heaven."

The Mystic having ended his discourse  
All those assembled in the Chapel said,  
*Amen*, though waiting my conclusion yet,  
When the good Seer would lift his blameless hands  
And ask the Father's blessing on the World.

## CONVERSATION XX

### ENLIGHTENMENT

#### I

ONE had said I should be told  
How I came to be,  
Should read, as on a scroll unrolled,  
My destiny.

Out of the slimy seas,  
Out of the murky Earth  
Out of the flaming Sun,  
Out of the fire-mists, ere one  
Of Heaven's bright orbs its cycle had begun,  
Out of the mind, before all these,  
Was my birth.

I was not at the first in the dark womb,  
I will not lie at last in the dread tomb;  
I am not by the Kosmos bound  
But through its changeful round  
Continuing  
In sentient being,—  
Striving  
Ascending  
Ascent unending.

## The Colloquy

Yet comes the Night of Rest,  
Comes the Sabbath Day,  
Comes the year of Jubilee;  
Comes to weary, burdened one,  
Saddened, wretched, and undone,  
Death to set the Spirit free.  
He, who in very restlessness,  
Brings forth to strife, takes to His breast  
All sorrow and distress.

### II

Did I not know Him,  
When Earth was yet to be ?  
And shall I fear to go to Him,  
Who ever was with me ?  
I had no fear  
When coming here,  
And knowing that I cannot stay,  
Why do I dread to go away ?  
But Earth still holds me  
And makes me cowardly,  
And Sin would have me trembling go  
Into His presence. No,  
Sharing with Him the past eternity,  
Futurity  
Can have no dread,  
Nor any limbo of the dead  
Lie in the way  
Where endlessly  
Progress and gain open their gates to me.

## Conversation 𐆆

### III

Lo! now I hear  
As of one near  
To me  
But speaking out of deep infinity,  
Bidding mine inquiry cease,  
Saying, *Peace*  
*I give to thee.*

### IV

Amen! Amen!  
Not again  
May we all meet, till before Him  
Whose purity  
Pales the glory  
Of Kherubim and Seraphim.

Amen! Amen!  
Then,  
Leaving behind the strife and woe  
And singing as we go  
The gladsome way,  
Until on High  
We join the angels of God who never die.

Amen! Amen!  
Even the dæmons yield to Him  
Who is eternal over all  
And put their evil under them  
And sin and grievous fall,



## The Colloquy

Rising again to light  
And Heavenly purity in azure height.

Amen! Amen!  
To Him that is and was and faileth never  
Be praise ascribed, now and forever.  
Amen! Amen!

THE END









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